



# *Mining History News*

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mining History Association

A Publication of the Mining History Association

Winter 2021/22

## ***Presidential Pickings – The Paper Record Behind Mining History***

I have a confession: I'm a historian, and yet I haven't set foot in an archive since 2019 due to COVID-19. I'm getting antsy-- I'll look for digitized photos in online repositories, browse electronic versions of the *Engineering and Mining Journal* and *Mining and Scientific Press*, check out high-resolution historic newspapers at the *Chronicling America* site, and even peek at census images, but it's not the same. I miss interaction with the real-deal paper record!

Historians call the records and documents created in the past "primary sources" and view them as the basic building blocks of good history. Distinguishing between a primary source and a secondary source can be tricky, but one of the most succinct descriptions I've heard is that the creators of primary sources did not make them to save or tell history, while creators of secondary sources, such as books, articles, or websites, were deliberately committing an act of historymaking.

People who study mining history in the United States have some well-known collections of primary sources which rarely fail to provide at least some insight. Newspapers are an essential resource, prolific in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and now often widely available in digital form. The technical press – publications written by and for the mining industry – forms a crucial and robust source base for the same time period. And government reports, mostly at the federal level but also sometimes extending to the state level, contain invaluable information.

But how can we go beyond these standard sources? To be sure, good historians develop a knack for extracting insight from sources that might seem more like gangue than ore at first. Clark Spence's use of British incorporation records to discuss English investment in American mining is one excellent example. Census records can also illuminate life in mining towns as demonstrated by Cathy Spude's work on Skagway, Ron James' writing about Virginia City, and Ralph Mann's study of Grass Valley, to name just a few of my favorites. And, of course, oral histories are not exactly primary sources like the others I've mentioned so far but are the heart of many excellent works of mining history, especially mining in more recent time periods.

What we really need to have is more primary sources, such as personal papers, corporate records, and low-level government archives. All too often, people involved with mining might not think that their everyday paper trail matters. There can be some truth in that. Any archivist would tell you that it's impossible to save everything, that not every piece of paper ever touched by a miner ends up being mining history, and that only "significant" materials generally warrant saving. All

true. But excellent archivists also have a capacious sense of what might actually be “significant” to future researchers. Plus, it makes sense that the people who made those primary sources might not be able to envision how they could be used by future historians – because the primary sources were not created with history in mind!

Personal papers are essential to revealing mining history from the standpoint of those who were there. In the past, these included letters, personal photographs, and other materials. (Today, this probably includes emails!) Corporate records are likewise crucial. So much mining in the last century or more has been done under the auspices of corporations (large and small) that any realistic mining history must reckon with mining businesses, which is much more likely to be accurate if corporate primary sources are available for research. Records generated by governments can also be quite important, and while they might be somewhat more likely to be saved for posterity, these documents too, especially at lower levels of government, can slip through the cracks and disappear from history.

So what can we, as mining historians, do to help make sure these primary source records survive for future researchers? I can think of a few steps that anyone can take. First, we need to take steps to help preserve them if we are can. This could mean proper caring for family papers, trying to find a good archival home for unwanted records (in local or state archives, or in research libraries that collect mining-related materials), advocating within corporate or bureaucratic structures for record retention and preservation, or even monetary donations to your favorite archives, if able.

The second step we can take is to *go use them and give credit to their keepers!* Prescient past archivists may have envisioned that “someday” the records they saved would be valuable to a researcher, but using archival records actually demonstrates that “someday” has arrived. If the archives have proof that mining-related historical records are valuable, because they are being used, there will be a better chance of allocating scarce resources of time or money into saving more of them or making the ones they already have easier to access. Many grants for preserving sources likewise require that the archives demonstrate their value, and again, existing use is the most valuable coin of the realm. Correctly citing where archival materials came from is therefore an essential step in ensuring valuable use. In today’s networked world, it is all too simple to copy and share a historic photo without giving credit to the organization who preserved it and then scanned it in the first place. (To say nothing of those online meanies who actually *remove* credit information and replace it with their own, to enhance their own online presence. String ‘em up by the thumbs!) But without correctly citing the archives, there’s none of that credit flowing back, demonstrating the value of saving mining history records. One more good idea along these lines: if you’ve used records held by an archive, and then published that information somewhere, let the archive know and provide them with a copy of the publication, if possible.

It’s true that my COVID-enforced time away from archives hasn’t been all bad. Archivists have redoubled their efforts to share digital copies of materials, and I have gotten to spend additional time with projects I hadn’t gotten around to finishing before. But I can’t wait to get back in a real reading room and get my hands on some genuine mining history primary sources. Because doing this isn’t just good for my own work, it’s good for our whole field of mining history.

Eric Nystrom, MHA President

The Nominating Committee has been busy identifying candidates for the office of President (taking office in Birmingham), President-elect, three Council positions, and the Nominating Committee. The office of President is open due to the untimely passing of MHA Vice President John Stewart. Chris Huggard has accepted a nomination for the office of President and Dana Bennett has accepted a nomination for the position of Vice President / President-elect. The work of identifying candidates for the Council positions and the Nominating Committee remain. If interested in serving on the MHA Council or Nominating Committee or to nominate someone for that office, please contact Stephen Hart ([stephen\\_hart45@msn.com](mailto:stephen_hart45@msn.com)). In the meantime, a ballot for the offices of President and Vice-President is below. Look for a ballot for the Council and Nominating Committee positions in the Spring newsletter.

**Dana Bennett** recently retired as President of the Nevada Mining Association and now lives in the remote Nevada mining town of Midas. As the town's longtime historian, she authored a book in 2007 whose proceeds benefit the historic preservation group Friends of Midas. Dana has been on the board of directors for this 501(c)3 organization since its inception in 1994 and currently serves as President. Holding two history degrees, Dana launched a career in public policy development and advocacy more than 30 years ago and sometimes operated her own consulting business. Her client roster usually included mining entities. Dana interrupted her career to earn a history PhD from Arizona State University in 2011. She has written many articles about Nevada history and was commissioned to produce a book about the history of Battle Mountain, a mining/ranching Nevada town. Dana continues to serve on the Nevada Governor's Board of Economic Development and the Executive Advisory Board for UNR's Mackay School of Earth Sciences and Engineering and was recently appointed Story Editor for the Northeastern Nevada Historical Society Quarterly. Dana joined MHA in 2015, served three years on the Council, and participated in planning MHA's virtual Elko conference in 2021.

Mining History Association, P.O. Box 1536, Cape Girardeau MO 63702-1536

○ Dana Bennett ○ \_\_\_\_\_ (write in)

## **Resolve to Join the MHA in the Magic City in 2022**

The Mining History Association is slated to return to live Conferences with our visit to Birmingham in 2022. Birmingham became the center of iron and steel production in the Southeastern U.S. due to the abundant iron ore, coal, and limestone deposits in the Birmingham area. The tours arranged by the Organizing Committee include historic coal and iron mining areas, a marble quarry, and the Sloss (City) Furnace.

The Hilton Birmingham at UAB (University of Alabama – Birmingham) serves as our conference hotel. There is a special group rate for the MHA of \$139 per night. Use the code "MHA" when making reservations. Make your reservations early by calling 205-933-9000, ext. 1. For those arriving by air, the Hilton has a complimentary shuttle from Shuttlesworth International Airport (BHM).

Birmingham's Shuttlesworth International Airport (BHM) is served by American, Delta, Southwest, and United Airlines. Flights arrive from Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Las Vegas, Miami, Philadelphia, and Tampa. There are a variety of transportation options from the airport to local hotels (taxi, bus, etc.). Birmingham is also accessible from a number of interstate highways for those able to take the extra time to drive. Please visit the conference meeting page on the MHA website for potential side trips.

There are also a wide variety of other accommodations in the Birmingham area from quaint bed and breakfasts to many national chains at various price points. For campers, there are a number of state park and private campgrounds outside the Birmingham metro area such as at Oak Mountain State Park (south) and at Tannehill Ironworks Historic State Park (west). Any campers will know how to surf the web for more options.

The registration form is one page 7 of this newsletter and can also be downloaded from the MHA website. Additional information regarding potential tours can also be located on the website and on the following page (5) of this newsletter.

We look forward to seeing you in Birmingham in 2022!!

### **Attention Potential Vendors**

The MHA will be meeting in Birmingham, Alabama at the Hilton Birmingham UAB from June 23-26, 2022. On Friday and Saturday, June 23 and 24, vendor tables will be available at \$35 per table in a location adjacent to the session rooms.

The Conference attracts people from across the U.S. and world that interested in mining books, artifacts and other collectible items. Persons interested in being a vendor should contact Jim Day at [dayjs@montevallo.edu](mailto:dayjs@montevallo.edu)

## **Optional Tour Information for Birmingham 2022**

The registration form for the Conference is on page 7 and can also be found on the MHA website. Please note that a number of the tours have limited capacity including the Saturday and Sunday tours. To aid you in making your tour selections, more detail on the tours follows:

### **Sloss Furnaces Tour**

**Thursday, June 23, 2022, 1:00 pm – 5:30 pm.**

The Sloss Iron Furnaces National Historic Landmark is a well-preserved iron smelting complex and has an excellent museum on-site. From 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm, there will be an iron pour demonstration.

PLEASE NOTE: Thursday is “Sloss Day” for the MHA and our only chance to see this amazing site. Birmingham is hosting the World Games in July 2022, and Sloss will close after our event.

### **Birmingham Iron Mines, Parks, and Company Towns**

**Saturday, June 25, 2022.**

The iron mining legacy of Birmingham is preserved at several locations in and near the city. You can select a tour of one of three of those locations:

- 1) Red Mountain Park (west of downtown): walking trails among former iron ore mines.
- 2) Ruffner Mountain (east of downtown): former iron ore mining area, now a nature preserve that includes hiking trails. OR
- 3) Company Towns: visit former mining communities in West Birmingham as well as owners’ mansions lining the brow of Red Mountain.

### **Sylacauga Marble Excursion**

**Sunday, June 26, 2022. 9:00 am – 5:00 pm.**

The world-class marble quarries in Sylacauga are located about an hour’s drive east of Birmingham. A 32-mile-long formation has been known for producing the “whitest marble” (and many other varieties) for over a century. It has been used in countless construction, interior decor, and sculptural projects. We will see the Alabama Marble, Mineral, and Mining Company (AM3) quarry operation and visit with European-trained Sculptor-in-Residence, Craigger Browne. (Box lunch included)

### **Tannehill, Blocton and Brierfield Excursion**

**Sunday, June 26, 2022. 10:00 am – 5:00 pm.**

This tour will visit two antebellum ironworks, the Tannehill Ironworks Historical State Park and the Brierfield Ironworks Historical State Park. Both of these furnaces supplied the Selma Arsenal with iron during the Civil War but were destroyed by Union Cavalry in the Spring of 1865. Brierfield reopened after the Civil War. The state-of-the-art Alabama Iron and Steel Museum is also located at Tannehill. We will also visit the well-preserved Blocton Beehive Coke Ovens. (Box lunch included)




**MHA Nuggets**  
**February 15**  
**March 15**  
**April 19**  
**May 17**

8:00 pm Eastern  
 7:00 pm Central  
 6:00 pm Mountain  
 5:00 pm Pacific

5 minutes of social time  
 20/25 minute presentation  
 Questions/social time

Zoom Meeting, Passcode: MHA  
 OR  
 LiveStream on YouTube  
 Mining History Association channel



Join us for MHA Nuggets the third Tuesday of the month on Zoom. Each Nugget includes a mining related presentation and social time to spend with your MHA friends. We also have openings for talks, it doesn't have to be academic. Topics can include a visit to a historic mining site or anything mining related. Contact Barbara Clements at [mininghistoryassociation@gmail.com](mailto:mininghistoryassociation@gmail.com) if you would like to present an MHA Nugget in the future.

You can also join us on YouTube. You do not need to sign into YouTube, just watch us there. Go to YouTube.com and search for Mining History Association, click on our logo and it will take you to our channel. The LiveStream will start at the top of the hour. 8 p.m. Eastern, 7 p.m. Central, 6 p.m. Central, 5 p.m. Pacific

February Nugget  
 Topic: *Colorado's Gold and Silver Booms and Busts: 1858-2020*  
 Feb 15, 2022 07:00 PM Central Time  
 ID: 839 4156 3476

March Nugget  
 Topic: *Rock Springs: The Rest of the Story*  
 Mar 15, 2022 07:00 PM Central Time  
 Meeting ID: 899 8719 3180

April Nugget  
 Topic: *English Steam Pumping Engines*  
 Apr 19, 2022 07:00 PM Central Time  
 Meeting ID: 856 1076 2066

### Online Payment Change

We are changing our online payment system to Square. Payments for the conference will be first to change. You may still see PayPal for membership.

### **In Memorium**

We note and honor the life and research of ***Richard Lingenfelter***. Richard passed away this past year.

As a scientist, he is known for his work on the origins of cosmic and gamma rays. His many publications as a historian include *Bonanzas & Borrascas: Gold Lust and Silver Sharks, 1848-1884*; *Bonanzas & Borrascas: Copper Kings & Stock Frenzies, 1885-1918*; *Death Valley and the Amargosa: A Land of Illusion*; *Steamboats on the Colorado River, 1852-1916*; *The Hardrock Miners: A History of the Mining Labor Movement in the American West, 1863-1893*

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***Mike McQuiston***, a well-known safety instructor and long-time member of MHA passed away in December. He and his wife Helen enjoyed traveling and seeing the country as they attended MHA's annual meetings. Mike's professional life was in health and safety in the mining industry, working at Round Mountain, ASARCO and the Arizona State Mine Inspector among others, prior to going into private practice (Traveling Mine Safety).

# MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Birmingham, Alabama

June 23-26, 2022

Your Name (for Badge) \_\_\_\_\_  
Spouse/Partner Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip/Country \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Please check if a current MHA Member [ ] To renew or to become a Member, go to

[www.mininghistoryassociation.org/member](http://www.mininghistoryassociation.org/member)

Please do not list me in the conference packet [ ] Circle YES or NO to list email address

## REGISTRATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MAY 15, 2022

NOTE: Some tours and events have limited space. Early registration is encouraged.

Refer to the newsletter or website for detailed information on each event.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION		Cost per person	Number attending	Total per event
	Members	\$80	_____	\$_____
	Non-Members	\$90	_____	\$_____
	Spouse/Partner	\$40	_____	\$_____
	Student (w/School ID)	\$55	_____	\$_____
Thu, Jun 23	Sloss Tour (1:00-4:00)	\$20	_____	\$_____
	Iron Pour Demonstration (4:00)	\$30	_____	\$_____
	Reception (Hilton) (6:30-9:00)	\$40	_____	\$_____
Fri, Jun 24	Lunch (Hilton)	\$40	_____	\$_____
	Awards Banquet (Vulcan) (6:30)	\$70	_____	\$_____
Sat, Jun 25	Presidential Luncheon (Hilton)	\$45	_____	\$_____
	Tour: Red Mountain Park (36 max)	\$40	_____	\$_____
	Tour: Ruffner Mountain (36 max)	\$40	_____	\$_____
	Tour: Company Towns (36 max)	\$40	_____	\$_____
Sun, Jun 26	Excursion: Tannehill, Blocton, Brierfield (36 max)	\$70	_____	\$_____
	Excursion: Sylacauga Marble Quarries (36 max)	\$70	_____	\$_____

Please use Registration Form on MHA website if paying by Square **TOTAL DUE** \$\_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: REGISTRATION FORM MUST BE MAILED EVEN IF USING SQUARE

Make checks payable to the Mining History Association; mail completed Registration Form and payment to—

MHA, 2022

c/o James S. Day

3005 North Grande View Cove

Maylene, AL 35114

*Mining History Association*  
PO Box 1536  
Cape Girardeau MO 63702-1536

## **Upcoming Events**

### **Anthracite Mining Heritage Month**

Various Locations visit <https://ahfdn.org/>  
Throughout January 2022

### **SME Conference**

Salt Lake City, Utah  
February 27 – March 2, 2022

### **SME Minnesota Conference**

Virginia, Minnesota  
April 11-13, 2022

### **Mining History Association Conference**

Birmingham, Alabama  
June 23-26, 2022

### **Australasian Mining History Conference**

Burra, South Australia  
Sept. 18-25, 2022

The *Mining History News* is published quarterly by and for the members of the **Mining History Association**. Submissions for the newsletter are encouraged.

Deadlines:	Spring issue:	February 15 <sup>th</sup>
	Summer issue:	June 15 <sup>th</sup>
	Fall issue:	September 15 <sup>th</sup>
	Winter issue:	December 15 <sup>th</sup>

Submissions for the newsletter should be sent to Paul R. Spyhalski at [prspyhal@yahoo.com](mailto:prspyhal@yahoo.com) with MHA at the start of the subject line.

**Change of address:** Please send all address changes to Barbara Clements, Membership Chair, at the following address:

Mining History Association  
PO Box 1536  
Cape Girardeau MO 63702-1536