



Mining History News

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mining History Association

A Publication of the Mining History Association

Spring 2020

Elko Conference Postponed

Conference planning in the COVID-19 era certainly creates Catch-22 situations. The Conference was scheduled to start after many of the existing pandemic related shutdown orders expired but there is no guarantee that those shutdowns would not be extended causing the Conference to be cancelled anyway.

The Red Lion Casino (like all casinos in Nevada) is currently shutdown. There is the difficulty of even scheduling airfare at this point and the strong likelihood that many of our potential attendees and presenters would be prohibited from traveling even domestically.

As such, the MHA Council met online on Sunday, March 22 and made the difficult decision to postpone the Elko Conference for one year. The Elko and Birmingham Planning Committees were part of the discussion and agreed to the change.

Presidential Pickings

To paraphrase the not-so-ancient quote, we are living in interesting times. All of us have felt the effects of the current pandemic, and it seems that we will for some time to come. The Council held a computer/phone conference meeting on March 22 to discuss the status of our upcoming conference in Elko, which included the folks on the ground in Nevada.

Several options were discussed: going forward in hopes that the worst will be over by June; postponing until later in the year; and postponing until either 2021 or 2022. The reasons for not going forward as planned in June were substantial, including health risks for our members (our membership demographic is heavily weighted to the high-risk category), the risk of having the conference cancelled out from under us by the State of Nevada (which carries a financial risk for MHA), and, quite frankly, we wanted this conference to be one of our all-time-best with regards to attendance.

The conference organizers were unanimous in their belief that the June conference should not be held as currently scheduled in June. The Council agreed.

The Council discussed holding the conference later this year but that suggestion raised a number of difficulties. A large number of our attendees and presenters come from academia. They will (hopefully) be back in their classrooms teaching in the fall and likely unable to attend our Conference at all then.

So, when to reschedule? Both the organizers in Elko and Birmingham were flexible, saying that they would be comfortable with doing a conference in either 2021 or 2022.

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Presidential Pickings (cont.)

After the discussion with the two conference committees, it was decided that it would make the most sense, especially for the paper presenters, to just push everything back a year. As such, MHA will hold its 2021 annual conference in Elko, Nevada, and the 2022 conference in Birmingham, Alabama. We hope to have the exact dates for Elko soon.

This was not an easy choice, but in the end, the Council was unanimous in its decision. There were a couple of other related issues discussed in light of the change in conference scheduling: the election for council, nominating committee, and vice president; and 2020 awards. It was decided that everyone currently serving would continue in their positions through the 2021 Conference and that the elections to fill those positions and any additional positions on the Council and Nominating Committee be held later this year to take effect in June of 2021. And, because most of our awards include a cash component, it was decided to make the awards as usual, sending out the checks, and making the formal presentations at the 2021 conference. Watch for the list of winners in the summer newsletter.

I want to thank all of the officers and council members for all of the extra work you put in during the last couple of weeks. Thanks for what you do for MHA. Some of us even learned new video conferencing skills! Everyone, please do your best to stay safe and healthy. We want to see all you next year in Elko!

MHA Officers

Barbara Clements has been working overtime trying to find members who are willing to serve the MHA on the Council and the Nominating Committee. With the uncertainty created by the lack of Conference and the lack of volunteers for position of Vice President and the Nominating Committee at least until recently, the decision was made to keep the existing officers in place through the 2021 Conference.

This will give anyone interested in the Vice President position one more year to prepare for the position. This decision does, however, double the number of Councilor positions to be filled in 2021 to a minimum of four. There will also be two positions open on the Nominating Committee.

The MHA relies entirely on volunteers to keep the organization active and alive. We need a variety of folks who bring their own particular expertise and experience to serve for the good of the group as a whole. The Council meets face-to-face once a year at the annual conference, and via email or zoom the rest of the year as needed. Please consider putting yourself forward as a candidate.

The current plan is for nominations and ballot to be distributed to the membership prior to December 31 for election prior to the 2021 Conference in Elko. Please contact Barbara Clements (bclements@clemrick.com) if you have questions or would like to volunteer. On behalf of everyone in MHA, thank you.

MHA Awards

Award winners are traditionally announced at the Friday Awards Dinner of our Conference. With the COVID-19 situation forcing a postponement of the Conference, the Council did discuss how the awards would be handled.

After Council discussion, each awards committee is authorized in their discretion to name award winners for the year including any runners-up or honorable mentions. This is being done in part due to some of the awards including a cash prize or stipend which should be tied to the year in which the award was actually given.

The Council also noted that being named an award winner can also be important to the building of a resume or promotion of research project, book or museum. The postponement of the Conference under extraordinary circumstances does not, in and of itself justify, postponement of that recognition.

As such, members are still encouraged to nominate individuals and organizations for each of the MHA Awards. A description of the awards can be found in this past year's summer newsletter as well as on the "Awards" tab of the MHA website. The members of each of the awards committee can also be found in the summer newsletter or by clicking on "Meet the Board" at the bottom of the homepage of the MHA website: www.mininghistoryassociation.org

International Mining History Conference in Sudbury, Ontario Postponed

This year's International Mining History Conference in Sudbury has been postponed. When more information becomes available on new dates, it will be shared on the MHA Facebook Page and in the next MHA newsletter.

Grants Available to Research at the American Heritage Center

The American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming offers a number of fellowships, grants and awards to research at the Center. Some of the fellowships fund as many as 20 days of research at the Center.

The travel grants authorize up to \$750 to provide support for travel, food and lodging to carry out research using the AHC's collections. The deadlines for most of the fellowships and grants are in April.

For more information on various fellowships or grants including applications, please visit the AHC website at: <http://www.uwyo.edu/ahc/grants/>

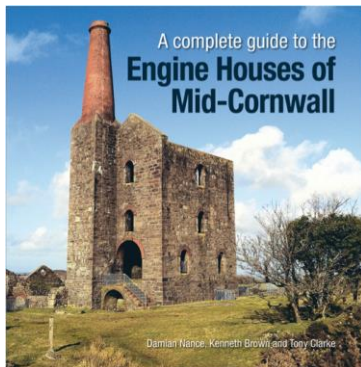
Mini Grants Available for Projects on or near Abandoned Mine Lands

The Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition will award mini-grants for four projects on abandoned mine lands in Alabama, Kentucky and Pennsylvania. The grant will include \$7,000 in start-up funds and 30 hours of project technical and planning assistance.

These grants will provide resources in order to turn viable concepts into fundable projects. Ideal projects improve sites on or adjacent to unreclaimed abandoned mine land features and include both a reclamation and economic development component.

The application deadline is May 1, 2020. Applications can be submitted by local government agencies, non-profits or NGOs. For more information visit reclaimingappalachia.org and click on "community mini-grants" under the "funding sources" tab.

More Recent Book Publications by MHA Members



A Complete Guide to the Engine Houses of Mid-Cornwall

NOWHERE in the world has metal mining been of greater importance than it has in Cornwall. What made this unparalleled productivity possible was the development, pioneered by Cornishman Richard Trevithick, of the Cornish beam engine, a reciprocating steam engine capable of driving pumps that could keep the ever deepening mines free of water. This book introduces these remarkable engine houses by providing an illustrated guide to those in Mid-Cornwall using contemporary and archival photographs supplemented with brief descriptions of the engines the buildings once contained, simple interpretations of some of their key features, and short histories of the mines of which they were part.

By: Damian Nance, Kenneth Brown and Tony Clarke

Date: 2019

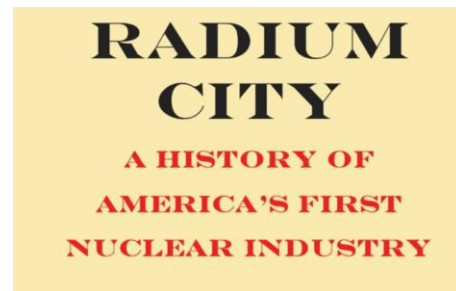
Publisher: Lightmoor Press, Lydney, Gloucestershire, UK

Binding: Paperback

Pages: 172

Price: £18

See: <http://lightmoor.co.uk/view-book.php?ref=L8610§ion=CatNew>



Radium City: A History of America's First Nuclear Industry

More than a hundred years ago, a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, based enterprise, Standard Chemical Company, became the first American company to produce radium. In fact, it produced more radium than any other in the world.

Radium City, A History of America's First Nuclear Industry, is the story of how two brothers, James J. and Joseph M. Flannery, undertakers-turned-industrialists, utilized science, technology, engineering, and medicine in an innovative commercial enterprise to produce and promote radium for medical purposes. It is an account of the first use of radioactive material in medicine, the role of scientific and medical research to promote its utilization, the effects of radiation on worker health and the environment, and the government's role in these matters. It is about a time when Pittsburgh was—briefly—nicknamed "Radium City."

By: Joel O. Lubenau and Edward R. Lande

Date: 2019

Publisher: Heinz History Center

Pages: 188

Price: Free Download

<https://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/publications/western-pennsylvania-history-magazine>

With more and more of us being placed under “stay at home” and “shelter in place” orders, we may have more and more time to fill each day. I, for one, have a stack of books that I promised myself I would read some day and some extra time to do research or write but sometimes you just need to watch something that isn’t the news. MHA Secretary Brian Leech was kind enough to provide some mining related movie recommendations.

Mining Movies Beyond North America

By Brian Leech

I love watching movies and I’ve long been fascinated by the portrayal of mining in them. Hollywood has produced a fair number of movies with mining involved—whether they are Westerns, like *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, science fiction, like *Avatar*, horror, like *My Bloody Valentine 3D*, or in the disaster genre, like *The 33*. Outside of Hollywood—indeed, outside of North America—there are a number of excellent feature films worth a viewing. Since so many of us will be stuck indoors in the coming weeks, I suggest you seek them out.

The first movie I’d suggest is the Australian film *Red Dog* (2011). If you live in Australia, you no doubt have already watched this heartwarming tale, based on the true story of Koko, a dog who roamed Western Australia’s Pilbara region during the 1970s. Inhabitants of the rough mining region come to universally love this Kelpie/Cattle Dog cross. The dog plays matchmaker, saves people’s lives, and unites the town of Dampier, where they eventually erect a statue in his honor (both in the movie and in real life—you can still see the statue today). It’s a great family film, although I admit to getting a bit weepy. There are some truly sad moments scattered amongst crazy characters and funny scenes.

Next up on this international mining film tour, I suggest *Blind Shaft* (2003), the story of two con-men who work in remote Chinese coal mines. The con-men run a repeated scam that involves underground murder and the extortion of mine management, until one of the criminals becomes increasingly sympathetic towards their next victim. The movie was filmed in coal mines on the border between the Hebei and Shanxi provinces of northern China. The film crew often had to sneak into the mining areas. Despite the film’s international acclaim, the Chinese government, worried about the movie’s harsh view of these often-illegal coal mines, apparently banned public viewings.

Now to Europe. Although we’re now out of the season, it’s never a bad time to watch *Rare Exports: A Christmas Tale* (2010), a Finnish fantasy film. It’s an R-rated horror movie—although it’s more a parody than a truly scary film. At the start of the film, a mining company digs through the ice. They accidentally unleash horror from beneath. In this case, that horror is a scrawny, wild, and terrifying Santa Claus. Ok, it sounds silly, but this is actually a well-crafted, incredibly entertaining movie. My in-laws now watch it every Christmas thanks to our recommendation.

I hope you’re able to watch some of the above movies. Feel free to share your own thoughts with me at BrianLeech@Augustana.edu, or, even better, give us all suggestions of other mining movies to watch via the MHA’s Facebook page.

More Mining and Museum News

Soo Locks to Open

The Burns Harbor was the last northbound freighter to pass through the Soo Locks on January 15th. The locks are scheduled to re-open on March 25th at 12:01 a.m. The Burns Harbor is reported to have left port and is scheduled to be the first freighter to pass through the Locks at the start of the shipping season.

Bingham Canyon Mine Life Extended

Rio Tinto recently announced that production of copper and other metals at the Bingham Canyon Mine could continue through 2032 under a \$1.5 billion investment. The funds will be used to build additional infrastructure and tap into a rich ore body in the mine's south wall.

Pumpkin Hollow Makes First Shipment

Production at the Pumpkin Hollow Mine near Yerington, Nevada began in December following roughly \$200 million in development. The first shipment of copper concentrate was made by truck and reported by Nevada Copper on December 24th. Ramp up to full-scale commercial production will continue through the first half of 2020.

Gold Prices Renew Interest in the Black Hills

At least five companies have been drilling for gold in the Black Hills region spurred on by rising gold prices. Nelson Baker, CEO of Mineral Mountain Resources explained that "We look at the Black Hills as actually pretty largely under-explored. The potential to find other Homestake-style deposits is definitely real."

Goldrush–Fourmile Complex May Extend Nevada Gold Boom

The combined Goldrush – Fourmile complex, roughly 20 miles west of Elko, is expected to become another Tier One gold asset on the books of Nevada Gold Mines Corp. The Goldrush is expected to start producing in 2021.

Pit Horse Memorial

A statue to recognize the pit horses used in coal mining in Australia is being added to Kurri Rotary Park. As many as 70,000 pit horses were registered in Australia in 1919 falling to 22,000 in use during the 1950's. The last pit horse in Australia became redundant in 1983.

The life-sized bronze statue will include a pit horse, skip and wheeler. The entire bronze statute includes between 90 to 100 separate sections that must be welded together.

Just because, your editor did some poking on the interwebs and found that the New Gladstone Coal Mine near Centerville, Iowa claims to be the last pony mine in America. The New Gladstone closed in 1971. Iowa State University created a documentary on the mine shortly after its closing. The documentary has been split into 3 segments and can be found on youtube. The videos of Gladstone's operations can be found by searching for "last pony mine."

Coal Miner's Museum Upgrades in Fairmont

A number of coal miners exhibits in Fairmont, West Virginia will be consolidated on the third floor of the Arts and Antiques Marketplace Building (205 Adams Street). Some of the equipment had been on display at the Coal Country Mini Golf Course and some of the exhibits were formerly housed in the basement of the Marion County CVB. The upgrade will more than double the size of the museum and allow it to also represent the coal history of Monongalia, Preston, Taylor and Barbour Counties as well.

Pioneer Tunnel and Coal Mine Receives Grant

The Pioneer Tunnel and Coal Mine in Ashland, PA was recently awarded a \$400,000 grant for the construction of a new barn to house the narrow gauge steam locomotives used to pull the passenger mine cars along the side of the Mahanoy Mountain. The Pioneer Coal Mine gives the public the opportunity to learn about coal mining.

2020 a “Transformational Year” for Cleveland Cliffs

Attendees of our Marquette Conference had the opportunity to see first-hand part of the the 170 plus year legacy of Cleveland Cliffs mining. Cleveland Cliffs CEO Lourenco Gonclaves recently announced that “2020 will be the most transformational year in our 173 year history.”

That transformation includes up to \$100 million in improvements to Northshore Mining at the Peter Mitchell Mine near Babbitt, Minnesota and production facilities at Silver Bay. Taconite production at these facilities began in 1956 when Reserve Mining became the first large scale taconite operation in North America.

The upgrades allow Northshore to also produce DR-grade pellets in addition to the standard taconite pellets. The Northshore plant at Silver Bay is the only iron ore processing plant in the United States capable of producing low-silica DR-grade pellets.

The DR-pellets are being produced for Cliff’s hot-briquetted iron (HBI) plant being constructed at Toledo, Ohio. Hot-briquetted iron is a supplement that makes a premium grade of steel when it is combined with scrap iron. As an additional bonus, hot briquetted iron needs less energy to be turned into steel.

Construction at the \$700 million HBI project site was recently stopped by COVID-19 guidance. Once constructed, Cliffs will be the only producer of high quality customized feedstock for domestic electric arc furnaces.

In addition to enhanced taconite production, Cleveland Cliffs recently took further steps to fully vertically integrate by acquiring AK Steel. The acquisition was completed on March 13th.

AK Steel is a leading producer of innovative flat-rolled carbon, stainless and electrical steel products and is a primary supplier to the auto industry. The acquisition allows Cleveland Cliffs to become a vertically integrated producer of value-added iron ore and steel products.

Interestingly, it took Cleveland Cliffs 173 years to become a vertically integrated entity. Andrew Carnegie and U.S. Steel pioneered the concept of vertical integration more than a hundred years ago.

Mining, at least in Minnesota, has been deemed a component of critical manufacturing. The most recent stay at home order from Governor Walz states as part of its definition of “critical manufacturing: *“This category includes iron ore mining and processing operations and supplier/vendor industries essential to such mining and processing operations”*.

Mining may well be able to continue with alterations to operations for worker safety but the real question is going to be whether there will be demand for the mined product. The auto industry is a primary customer of AK Steel and it remains to be seen how COVID-19 will impact demand for steel for the rest of this year and early 2021. Either way, 2020 will certainly be transformational for Cliffs and many of us.

When Whiskey was Cheaper than Water

Mining near Candelaria, Nevada started in 1873 but mining and town development suffered from a lack of access to water. The nearest water source was 9 miles away. Water was shipped at the hefty price of \$1 a gallon making it more expensive than whiskey. With prices like that and today’s empty store shelves, I wonder what a roll of toilet paper could fetch.

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Upcoming Events

Australasian Mining History Conference
Cairns, Queensland, Australia
July, 2020

Western History Association Conference
Albuquerque, New Mexico
October 14-17, 2020

Mining History Association Conference
Elko Nevada
June 2021

International Mining History Conference
Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario
June TBD, 2021

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

Deadlines: Summer issue: June 15th
 Fall issue: September 15th
 Winter issue: December 1st
 Spring issue: February 15th

Submissions for the newsletter should be sent to Paul R. Spyhalski at prspyhal@yahoo.com with MHA at the start of the subject line.

Change of address: Please send all address changes to Rebecca Lange, Membership Chair, at the following address:

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