



Mining History News

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mining History Association

A Publication of the Mining History Association

Fall 2020

Presidential Pickings

Having the cleanest basement and garage, the most organized closets, and bookshelves arranged by subject are all good in themselves, but they are small consolation for the joys of face-to-face conversation with friends and family and travel to interesting places near and far. Hopefully this finds you well and not suffering from cabin fever.

In case you have reached the bottom of your "I'll read this someday" pile, consider checking out a new museum via the internet. In this year of restricted and reduced travel, many museums have created new programming on their websites that will bring the museum to you, wherever that happens to be. Art museums, like the Art Institute of Chicago, have put virtual gallery tours on their websites. A great opportunity to take a tour with the curator in charge! Zoos and botanical gardens have live webcams so that you can get up close and personal with the resident plants and animals.

History museums have put a plethora of programs online. Blowing my own previous institution's horn, The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums in Platteville, WI put a whole school field trip on their website (www.mining.jamison.museum) after schools in our area were closed in March. You can take a virtual tour of the 1845 Bevans Lead, explore the award-winning exhibit *African American Lead Miners in Wisconsin*, and check out the Rollo Jamison collections. You can even take a drone flight over the museum campus! Museums all over the world have equally wonderful experiences for you to discover.

And, in case you haven't already been made aware, the holidays are approaching. Please consider doing some of your gift shopping in museum online stores. You will help support the museum and find some unique gifts for family and friends.

I would like to thank those of you who have put your names forward for election as officers or council members. MHA relies on volunteers to make things happen on behalf of you all, and hopefully you appreciate the job that they do. Please consider running for council yourself next year. It's a fun group to be a part of.

There is still no news about the status of our annual conference. We were hoping to have new dates to share with all of you, but the continuing pandemic and the uncertainty of travel and meeting in large groups has caused us to continue in a holding pattern. Rest assured we will let you know as soon as we are able to make a reasonable decision.

Please stay safe and well, everyone. We hope to see you in Elko.

Introducing MHA Nuggets!

Half-hour to one-hour Zoom gatherings about mining history topics. Everyone can participate, we will not have a speaker. The topics will be for sharing mining history experiences and research. If you can't make it, that's ok, they will be recorded and uploaded to the MHA YouTube channel. Announcements will be made on Facebook.

Our first three will be:

Friday, October 30 at 6:00 pm Central time (7pm Eastern, 5pm Mountain, 4pm Pacific) Topic: Conference presenters who would have presented in 2020 and/or will in 2021 are welcome to discuss their research/paper.

Friday, November 20 at 7:00 pm Central time (8pm Eastern, 6pm Mountain, 5pm Pacific & Arizona) Topic: Historic mine tours that you recommend.

Friday, December 18 at 7:00 pm Central time (8pm Eastern, 6pm Mountain, 5pm Pacific & Arizona) Topic: Current/operational mine tours that you recommend.

If you are not on Facebook and want to participate, please email: mha@clerick.com and Barbara Clements will send you the information. Eric Nystrom will be providing the Zoom account courtesy of Arizona State University.

IN MEMORIAM

Clark Spence, one of the Mining History Association's founding members and first president, passed away on October 24, 2020. Clark was a professor of history at the University of Illinois from 1961-1990, and the author of a number of books. The Clark Spence Award is given bi-annually to the best book in mining history published during the previous two years.

Call for Additional Presentations

Mining History Association Conference
Elko, Nevada – June 2021

The Program Committee of the MHA invites additional proposals for individual presentations or complete sessions (including a chair) on any topic or aspect of mining history. If your proposal was accepted for presentation to the 2020 Conference, you do not need to resubmit your proposal but we do ask that you contact Eric to indicate whether you are available to make your presentation at the 2021 Conference.

Sessions normally include three papers of twenty minutes each. *All Presenters must register for the conference.* There are no temporal or geographic limits to topic material. Presentations that address mining history of the Elko County area or Nevada in general are, however, particularly welcome given the location of the Conference.

Proposals should include title of presentation, an abstract (not to exceed one page) for each presentation plus biographical information about each presenter, including mailing/email address. Please send the written proposals via email attachments to Erik Nystrom (eric.nystrom@asu.edu) by January 1, 2021. Submission by email is required.

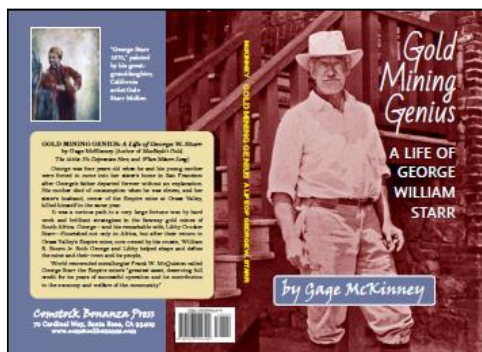
RECENT PUBLICATIONS:

GOLD MINING GENIUS: A LIFE OF GEORGE W. STARR

by Gage McKinney

Comstock Bonanza Press, Santa Rose, CA,
September 2020, 244 pp. 57 illus. 2 maps,
paperback \$23.00

Four-year-old George Starr and his mother had to move into her sister's San Francisco home when his father abandoned them. Worse yet, when George was eleven, his mother died of TB and his aunt's husband, owner of Grass Valley's Empire gold mine, shot and killed himself. Thus began George's fantastic journey from orphan to millionaire. His love affair and partnership with the lovely Libby Crocker flourished on two continents. After managing a dozen of South Africa's largest gold mines for the Barnato Brothers, Starr returned to Grass Valley to manage the legendary Empire gold mine for his cousin William Bourn. As a turn-around artist who took properties others thought worked out and made them into big producers again, Starr transformed the Empire, making it one of the deepest, longest and richest gold mines in California. Over the course of their lives, George and Libby Starr helped to shape the town of Grass Valley and demonstrate the impact mining families had on rural communities.



My apologies to an additional author who submitted their book information. Due to a technology glitch your information was lost. Please re-send and I will include your information in the Winter 2020 newsletter.

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION REQUESTED

Ms. Jordan Bennett, a second-year graduate student studying Anthropology in the Museum and Heritage Studies (MHS) specialization at University of Denver, is conducting a survey of individuals interested in Asian American history as well as mining history about current Chinese American representation in museums. She will be using that information as part of her thesis and in developing an exhibit for the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology (IMMG) in Boise.

As individuals obviously interested in mining history, you are invited to participate in the research study *Making Visible the Forgotten History of Chinese Immigrant Miners in an Industrial Science Museum* by completing a questionnaire on the topic. A link to the questionnaire is below.

The exhibit she is developing for the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology (IMMG) in Boise celebrating the resiliency and perseverance of Idaho's Chinese immigrant miners during the American Gold Rush of the late 19th century. Questionnaire responses also add to this collaboration by including an avenue for feedback from community members with interest in Asian American history and museums.

Other collaborators involved in this exhibit include: The Payette and Boise National Forests, The Asian American Collaborative Collection at University of Idaho, Gayle Dixon, and Dr. Pei-Lin Yu.

If you are willing to participate, please visit this link to complete the questionnaire:

<https://tinyurl.com/CommunityQuestionnaire>

A Black Lead Miner Made History in Iowa in 1839

The opening of the “African American in the Lead Mining District” Exhibit by The Mining and Rollo Jamison reminded me of some of my research on race relations and civil rights in Iowa. This story begins with a man named Ralph. Ralph was a slave owned by Jordan Montgomery in Missouri.

Ralph entered into an agreement with his owner Montgomery in the spring of 1834 that allowed Ralph to go to Dubuque, Iowa. In exchange for his permission to leave the State of Missouri Ralph was to pay Montgomery \$450.00 plus interest from January 1, 1835. Ultimately Ralph worked in the lead mines at Dubuque but was unable to repay Montgomery.

Two slave catchers agreed to retrieve Ralph for Montgomery for the sum of \$100.00. They captured and handcuffed Ralph with plans to return him to Missouri via river boat. Fortunately for Ralph, Alexander Butterworth saw the goings on and was able to initiate *habeas corpus* proceedings in the newly formed courts before Ralph was carried outside the state.

The Iowa Supreme Court had recently been formed and had yet to issue any decisions. Iowa was governed by the anti-slavery provisions of the Northwest Ordinance at the time.

Montgomery argued for Ralph’s return as a fugitive slave. The Iowa Supreme Court rejected that contention writing *In the Matter of Ralph (A Colored Man)*¹ that because Montgomery had allowed Ralph to come to Iowa that Ralph could hardly be considered an escapee. The Iowa Court was also troubled by the possibility that Iowa would, in essence, be converted to a slave state if slaveowners could enforce slavery in Iowa.

The *Ralph* decision is interesting from a variety of viewpoints. From the lawyerly perspective, it is interesting how the *Ralph* decision differs from the later *Dred Scott* opinion. From a mining history perspective, it is also interesting that the first decision of the newly formed Iowa Supreme Court would involve a lead miner from Dubuque. The impact on Ralph was, of course, freedom from slavery for which he was obviously grateful returning to Judge Wilson’s backyard each year as a sign of his appreciation.

Sources:

Bezanson, Elaine Croyle. “Ralph Montgomery.” *The Goldfinch* 16, no. 4 (Summer 1995): 6.

Peterson, Henry K. “The First Decision Rendered by the Supreme Court of Iowa,” *The Annals of Iowa*, 34, no. 4 (Spring 1958): 304-307.

¹ *In the Matter of Ralph (A Colored Man)*, 1 Iowa Reports, Morris, 1 (1839)

A Favorite Mine: The Harvard Quarry by L. Michael “Mike” Kaas

Every mining historian or miner has a favorite mine or maybe several. Many are located in obscure places that would never be chosen as a site for an MHA conference; however, they all have interesting histories. One of my favorites is the Harvard Quarry located on Noyes Mountain near the tiny village of Greenwood in Oxford County, Maine. That area of Maine is known for its many granite pegmatite mines. They produced rather mundane minerals. Feldspar is used in ceramics and also as a kitchen cleanser. Before plastics, Mica was used in electronics, household appliances containing heating elements, and home heating stoves. However, pegmatites sometimes also contain an array of rare and unusual minerals including semi-precious gemstones like tourmaline and aquamarine. MinDat.org lists 33 mineral varieties found at the Harvard Quarry. During the World War II and Cold War era, in the 1940s and 1950s, the government purchased mica, beryllium minerals, and columbium/tantalum minerals for defense purposes, all from pegmatites.

The quarry started in the late 1800s. It got its name from Harvard University which operated the mine in 1923-24 for the study of pegmatite formations. The Harvard Mineralogical and Geological Museum (<https://mgmh.fas.harvard.edu>) has a wonderful collection from the quarry, but they only saved the choice specimens. Everything else ended up on the mine dump. As a kid from southern New Jersey, I spent summers in Maine and got interested in collecting rocks and minerals in the pegmatites. Stanley Perham operated quarries in the area and also a local rock shop. He let anyone collect minerals at his mines including the Harvard Quarry. There were no fees nor legal wavers in those days. Even a youngster could find very cool minerals there.

The Harvard Quarry got me interested in mining. I soon discovered that you could order tons of free or low-cost publications from the state and federal geological surveys and mining bureaus. Many were loaded with information on mining history. I was hooked on mining. While studying mining engineering, I had summer jobs at mines in Colorado, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and New Jersey, each area with a different type of mining and a different slant on mining history.

During my working years, I had the good fortune to be able to visit dozens of mines and gained a greater appreciation for mining history along the way. Two books in particular fueled that interest, Stan Dempsey's and Jay Fell's "Mining the Summit" and Charles Dew's "Iron Maker to the Confederacy." The latter sparked my interest in the mining history in my current "backyard" in Virginia. I attended my first Mining History Association conference in 1999 in Ouray. None of this would have ever happened had it not been for those early visits to the Harvard Quarry. That's why it is one of my favorites. All the Maine pegmatite mines are pretty quiet these days. Now and then a small miner hits a pocket of tourmalines. Fortunately, people can hike to the quarry on the new Noyes Mountain Preserve Trail developed by the Western Foothills Land Trust (<http://www.wflmaine.org/noyes-mountain>) and mineral collecting is still permitted!



Aerial view of the Harvard Quarry at the top of Noyes Mountain, Greenwood, Maine. The view of the scenic Oxford Hills from the mine is spectacular. (Google Earth)



The feldspar mill in West Paris, Maine (1925-1960s), a few miles from the Harvard Quarry, produced pure feldspar for ceramics. (Maine Geological Survey)

Retired Idaho Miner Helps Rediscover the “Wickedest City in America”

C.A. “Butch” Jacobson is a retired miner, police officer and historian. Butch provided significant regional information and many photos for the book [The Coeur d’Alene Gold Rush and Its Lasting Legacy](#). He serves as President of the Captain John Mullan Museum in Mullan, Idaho. Most important to this story is Butch’s interest in local history.

Efforts to locate the lost town site and cemetery at Taft, Montana began in 2018. Unfortunately for those initial researchers, the last remaining building – the Taft Hotel and Saloon – was torn down in the 1960s to make way for interstate 90. Nothing remained to recognize the hardships faced by the construction workers at Taft or the engineering feats they accomplished under difficult conditions at the start of the 20th Century.

Taft’s origins can be tied directly to the Milwaukee Railroad’s decision to extend its lines west to Seattle and Tacoma near the start of the 20th Century. Needing to somehow cross the Bitterroot Mountains to reach the West Coast, surveys of a potential route through St. Paul Pass started in August of 1906 and continued through November of that year. The Milwaukee Road decided to build a 1.66 mile tunnel at St. Paul Pass in an effort to keep the grade more manageable for the carrying of freight over the line.

The town site of Taft, Montana sprang to life in 1907 to house the workers and support construction of the tunnel from an east portal. Low wages and difficult living conditions drew itinerant workers of all types. The people of Taft became known for the fondness of whiskey, gambling, dog fights, rowdiness, prostitutes and lawlessness. The town boasted between 20 and 50 saloons but had no churches. Taft’s highest total population was close to the 3,000 and that population included as many as 500 prostitutes. The town had only one part-time deputy and was a long way from the county seat in Missoula.

Of the many towns that grew to support railroad construction, Taft was considered the wildest and woolliest. Most disagreements in Taft were settled by fistfights, knives or gunfire. One journalist described Taft as the “wickedest city in America” in 1909. As a result, Taft had its own version of boot hill complete with wooden crosses.

Even with the aforementioned distractions, the men worked long hours to accomplish the task of completing the Taft Tunnel. On February 28, 1909, the crews from the east portal met the crews that had been drilling and blasting from the west portal for a handshake through a small opening. Engineers later determined that the two bores met about perfectly despite starting 1.66 miles apart.

When construction was complete, much of the reason for the existence of Taft passed. A wildfire in 1910 soon followed wiping out the town along with 3 million acres of forest in Montana and Northern Idaho. Those wooden crosses and any evidence of the Taft cemetery disappeared in the “Big Burn.” Only the Taft Hotel and Saloon was rebuilt.

Fortunately, Butch Jacobson stopped at the Taft Hotel in the 1950’s after a successful elk hunt and found out the location of the cemetery. Apparently, no one else knew as the Forest Service, a weekly reporter and a video crew joined in the search for the cemetery by a local historian. After reading about the reporter’s article on the search, Butch, who now lives in Mullan, contacted them to inform them they were 400 to 500 yards too far to the west.

Using Jacobson’s directions, archaeologists were able to detect belt buckles, buttons, nails and bullets under the forest floor. The cemetery may have been found without Butch’s assistance, but it certainly would have taken a lot of luck and / or much more time.

2020 Continues to be a “Transformational Year” for Cleveland Cliffs

Our Spring 2020 issue noted Cleveland Cliffs CEO Lourenco Gonclaves announcing that “2020 will be the most transformational year in our 173 year history.” The focus of the article in the Spring issue was the acquisition of AK Steel and continued investment in their Northshore Mining properties.

Cleveland Cliffs continues to transform in 2020 agreeing in September to acquire the U.S. based operations of ArcelorMittal for \$1.4 billion in cash and shares. The acquisition will allow Cleveland Cliffs to become the biggest flat-rolled steel producer and the largest iron ore pellet producer in North America.

Cleveland-Cliffs purchased six steel mills, eight finishing facilities, two iron ore mining and pelletizing operations and three coal and cokemaking operations as part of the acquisition. Some of the mills and facilities included in the purchase are ArcelorMittal Indiana Harbor in East Chicago; ArcelorMittal Burns Harbor in Porter County; ArcelorMittal Riverdale in Illinois; and the Gary Plate finishing facility located inside U.S. Steel's Gary Works steel mill.

Robinson Copper Mine Expansion Plans

A proposed expansion at the Robinson Copper Mine near Ely, NV would extend the life of the mine to 2028. The proposal would authorize the resumption of mining in the Liberty Pit, construct a new King Waste Rock Dump south of the Liberty and Ruth Pits and expand storage capacity at the Giroux Wash Tailing Storage Facility. The USGS considers the Robinson to be one the largest Porphyry-Related mining operations. The Robinson also produces molybdenum, gold and some silver.

Deer Valley Acquires Daly West Mine Land and Headframe

The Daly West Mine head frame collapsed in 2015 leaving the head frame on the ground. This headframe is believed to have been built in 1914 or 1915 replacing a wooden headframe that was destroyed by fire. The frame toppled as the ground underneath gave way and two of the legs failed.

The Jordanelle Special Service District owned the land at the time of the headframe collapsed and it seemed certain that the District would dedicate no funds to restore the headframe. To many, the headframe served as the primary reminder of the Park City silver mining heritage.

The headframe was moved about 150 feet restored to an upright position in early September by the Deer Valley Resort.

PRM Seeks Permit to Re-Open Magnetation Facility

Prairie River Minerals, LLC is moving forward with the construction of a mineral processing demonstration plant near Coleraine, Minn. PRM will utilize UHDS to beneficiate ore from existing hematite stockpiles into lump and sinter ores.

Because PRM's operation could be considered scam mining under Minnesota law, it may be exempt from some elements of environmental review. Even so, operations will require air and water quality permits from the MPCA.

Air and water permit applications are currently pending before the MPCA with the comment period expiring on October 23rd. Construction on the plant was slated to start in April.

Mining History Association
P.O. Box 6536
Boise, Idaho 83707

Upcoming Events

Mining History Association Conference
Elko Nevada
June 2021

International Mining History Conference
Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario
June 20, 2021 – June 26, 2021

Australasian Mining History Conference
Burra, South Australia
September 27 – October 1, 2021

Western History Association Conference
Portland, Oregon
October 27-30, 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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