



Mining History News

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mining History Association

A Publication of the Mining History Association

Fall 2022

Black Coal Miners in West Virginia in the Gilded Age

By 1900 Black coal miners made up 26 percent of the workforce in the fossil fuel industry in the state of West Virginia. Fully three-quarters of those workers served as coal loaders. Considered unskilled laborers, the loaders drilled into and blasted the coal seams. After the dust settled, they loaded into cars the former trees that had been compressed tectonically for millennia. These African American “miners” earned from \$2.20 to \$5.00 per diem for their quota of five tons a day in the early twentieth century. William P. Tams, coal mining engineer and self-made mine owner from 1908 to 1955 of the Gulf Smokeless Coal Company of the Winding Gulf Coalfield, described the work: “The loader carried into the mine his picks, shovels, auger, tamping bar, fuse and a can of black powder After taking two and a half to three hours to make an undercut, the miners drilled, loaded, and fired the holes, bringing down the undercut coal. They then pushed up empty mine cars from the room mouth, loaded them, and returned them to the entry.” (from: <https://www.nps.gov/neri/planyourvisit/african-american-coal-miners-helen-wv.htm>)

Many of the Black coal workers had migrated to the area from northern Alabama to escape the harsher restrictions of Jim Crow in the Deep South despite experiencing a milder version of the unjust system in the Mountain State. Ironically, according to the National Park Service website for the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, where coal mining had dominated the local economy during the Gilded Age, Black coal loaders discovered that West Virginia was similarly infused with Jim Crowism. However, in the northern coalfields in towns like Nuttallburg, Hawk’s Nest, Stonecliff, and Helen, the Black workers—who comprised about 55 percent of the total workforce at the turn of the century—were subjected to segregation in housing, neighborhoods, schools, and churches, in practice. Whereas, in the southern region—most notably in the Pocahontas, Winding Gulf, and Williamson-Logan coalfields—Jim Crow was enshrined in law. Regardless, like all the miners and laborers and their families, each of the coal camps—like Tams—were company towns. By the early twentieth century, in fact, the companies provided housing—rented by race, and at a relatively affordable cost of two-day’s pay—and enforced welfare capitalism at company stores and hospitals. White and Black school children attended separate schools and families went to different churches. Mostly Baptists and Methodists, the Black mine families had deep devotions to their churches. Like miners and their families across the nation, they also spent lots of leisure time hunting and fishing, and enjoyed membership in clubs, albeit segregated ones, where they held dances, viewed community skits, and rolled their bowling balls. Summertime Sundays were dedicated to baseball with teams made-up of all-Black and all-White players, who rarely played each other. Along with this national pastime, African Americans also spent many evenings and weekends singing to the accompaniment of banjo, guitar, and fiddle players.

During the era of heightened unionization, the southern coalfields, and especially District 17, became focal points for Black and White labor struggles despite stricter, vigilantly enforced Jim Crowism. Since the 1870s, Democrats who had gained control of the state legislature passed laws enforcing segregation in public places and prohibiting Blacks from serving on juries. However, the response in the Black community was to resist these strictures through participation in integrated unions, especially the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). The effective result was civic and labor

organization and action. Unlike in the Alabama coalfields where Black miners were kept from voting altogether, their West Virginia counterparts took advantage of their less-restricted right to vote. With a majority in Fayette County, in 1896 they elected Christopher Payne, the first African American seated in West Virginia's House of Delegates.

The state government in Charleston worked to suppress the UMWA, especially during the Red Scare in the aftermath of World War I. Not unlike steel workers at Homestead, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere a generation earlier, the Black and White coal miners and laborers of West Virginia made a concerted effort to fight for change. Like company towns in the copper industry in the West, where Mexican American miners ran into a wall of corporate-state collusion, the Black-White allies of the UMWA came up against similar resistance. Consequently, company detectives and policemen displaced "troublemakers" and their families, causing great distress and a vigorous militancy that culminated in numerous gunfights between company officers and union men. The violence climaxed in 1921 when 15,000 armed miners, among them 2,000 African American compatriots, organized the "Miners March" in Logan and Mingo counties. Made up mainly of union men from the Kanawha-New River coalfield, their efforts culminated in the Battle of Blair Mountain. Taking place from August 25 to September 2, the "battle," considered the largest armed encounter in the U. S. since the Civil War and part of the wider spread Coal Wars of Appalachia, resulted in the strikebreakers known as the Logan Defenders and coal miners exchanging as many as a million rounds. Dozens were killed and the violence finally ended with President Warren Harding's order to nationalize the West Virginia guard to put a halt to the labor war. For introductory discussions on Black coal workers and miners, see www.nps.gov/neri/planyourvisit/african-american-coal-miners-helen-wv; www.nps.gov/neri/planyourvisit/african-american-life-in-a-coal-camp-nuttallburg; <http://expatalachians.com/black-coal-the-african-american-miners-of-west-virginias-southern-coalfields>)

A residual event reflected the larger resurgence in White violence against Blacks that was taking place across America. During the years immediately after World War I, hundreds of African Americans were murdered in race massacres, the most devastating being in Greenwood, an all-Black suburb of Tulsa known as the Wall Street of Black America. Armed White men, under false pretenses that a Black man spoke inappropriately to a White woman on an elevator, gunned down several hundred citizens after White pilots had dropped bombs from their planes on the central business district. That same year 1921, two Black men, in fact, were lynched by a White mob in Logan, West Virginia, despite the recent Capeheart Anti-lynching law, the culmination of nine years effort to prohibit lynching like the 1912 one of Robert Johnson, falsely accused of rape by a White woman in Bluefield. The new law gave the families of the victims the right to claim \$5,000 in compensation for such extralegal murders.

Interestingly, scholars have argued that despite the racial violence, Black and White miners created a deep sense of comradery due to their experiences in the Coal Wars. Ronald L. Lewis in *Black Coal Miners in America* (1987) and Kenneth R. Baily in "A Judicious Mixture: Negroes and Immigrants in the West Virginia Mines, 1880-1917" (*West Virginia History*, 1922) show how the unified Black-White labor alliance served to improve wages, safety, and lines of promotion. Still, these gains seem to have had little effect in maintaining an interest for Black miners remaining in the West Virginia coalfields beyond the World War II period. This precipitous decline in their presence in the post-war era has resulted in a steady drop in the number of Blacks in the West Virginia coal industry. Today Blacks make up only three percent of coal miners in the state and no single coal county has more than 10 percent of its population comprised of African Americans.

In the next newsletter, I will provide a brief overview of the Wieliczka Salt Mine, an UNESCO World Heritage site and underground museum in southern Poland. The museum director Jan Godlowski and his colleague Monika Dziobek attended the MHA conference in Birmingham, Alabama, this summer.

Chris Huggard, MHA President 2022-2023
Fayetteville, Arkansas,
chuggard@nwacc.edu

MHA Officers and Nominations

Each year, the Nominating Committee is charged with nominating a Vice President / President-elect, a number of positions on the Council, and at least one position on the Nominating Committee. Stephen Hart and Peter Maciulaitis currently service as the MHA's Nominating Committee.

Ideally, the Nominating Committee has three members all serving staggered three-year terms. Due to the lack of a third member on the Committee, there will be two positions to be filled on the Nominating Committee during the upcoming election.

To survive, the MHA needs volunteers like you to bring their own expertise and ideas forward for the good of the organization. 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.

If you have any interest in fulfilling either of those positions, please make your interest known to Stephen Hart (stephen_hart45@msn.com). Likewise, if you have any questions about your duties if asked to fill either position, please follow up with Stephen.

In Memorium

Dr. Ed Metz of Crawford, Nebraska, passed away peacefully on July 6, 2022. His knowledge of mining history and minerals will be missed.

Long-time MHA member, A. Paul Mogensen passed away in September. He was a geologist with Kennecott Copper for many years and an exploration geologist for Gold Fields when he retired in 1992.

WANTED MHA Zoom Co-Host

<u>Responsibilities:</u>	<u>Requirements:</u>
Be available to run monthly Zoom meetings	MHA Member
Attend the 2023 conference and help with Zoom broadcast	Good with technology
	Want to learn about Zoom and YouTube

The MHA needs a Zoom Co-Host who can step in when the main Host can't make the meeting and help with the Zoom broadcast of the 2023 MHA Conference in Socorro, NM. Please email Barbara Clements at mininghistoryassociation@gmail.com if you are interested.

Elizabeth Mine Interpretation Completed

Milestone Heritage Consulting recently completed the public education components for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/Environmental Protection Agency Superfund cleanup at the Elizabeth Copper Mine in South Strafford, Vermont. The Elizabeth Mine operated from 1809 to 1958 and was the largest copper mine in New England.



Strafford, Vermont Historical Society members enjoying the newly installed Elizabeth Mine history interpretive panels on Mine Road in South Strafford. The panels overlook the site of former World War II-era copper ore mill flotation tailings piles where the mine waste was gathered and capped as part of the EPA Superfund cleanup. *Photo Credit:* Matt Kierstead

Call for Presentations

33d Annual Conference Mining History Association
Socorro, New Mexico – June 8-11, 2023

The Program Committee of the MHA invites proposals for individual presentations or complete sessions (including a chair) on any topic or aspect of mining history. 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 Socorro County area or New Mexico 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 **Eric Clements** (eclements@semo.edu) by January 1, 2023. Submission by email is required.

Socorro Conference Hotel Room Block

There is no conference hotel, but the **Holiday Inn Express** has offered a special rate to MHA conference attendees. The Holiday Inn's conference rate starts at a very reasonable \$98.00 per night, plus tax. The number of blocked rooms is limited, and the booking window is open. **EARLY RESERVATIONS ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED.** Be sure to mention the Mining History Association when booking your conference rate room.

Holiday Inn Express 1040 North California Street, Socorro, NM, 87801. Direct: 575-838-4600 and mention "MHA." We have double queen and single king rooms.

Macey Center, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Conference Venue



The conference program will be held at the Macey Center on the campus of the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology. The center has a well-equipped auditorium with equipment to conduct a Zoom component of the conference presentations. There is space in the lobby for vendors. The Friday awards banquet will be nearby in the campus student union, the Fidel Center. The Saturday presidential luncheon will be held at the Macey Center.

Socorro June 8-11, 2023 conference details will be in the Spring 2023 newsletter and will also be posted on the MHA website as they evolve: www.mininghistoryassociation.org

Steel Gallows Headframes: The Kelly mine

In their “A Concise History of Mine Hoisting” published by the Western Museum of Mining & Industry, Paul Mogensen and Ed Hunter provided an introductory course on the operation and significance of these works at mine shafts across the country. The surface works are the symbol of mining industry most often photographed.



Mining History Association members have visited their share of hoists and headframes, wood or steel, that remain. They have memories of eating a pasty at the great hoist at Quincy mine, Houghton MI, experiencing the forest of headframes at Butte MT, Minnesota’s Soudan headframe tour, the many hoists of Cripple Creek district CO (and Ed’s home), and many more.

Scheduled for our Socorro conference is a field trip to the headframe in ghost town Kelly, NM (shown). Designed in 1906 by the Traylor Engineering Company of Allentown, PA, the headframe is often photographed and its imagery used as romantic representative of these first-generation steel headframes, hoists and surface works.

Future MHA Meetings

2023 Meeting

June 8-11

Socorro, NM

2024 Meeting

June 5-9

Park City, UT

2025 Meeting


June

Proposals Welcome

If you are interested in organizing an MHA annual conference please e:mail MHA Secretary Brian Leech for the “Guide for Organizing Mining History Association Annual Conferences” at brianleech@augustana.edu

MHA Nuggets	8:00 pm Eastern
November 15, 2022	7:00 pm Central
January 17, 2023	6:00 pm Mountain
February 21, 2023	5:00 pm Pacific
March 21, 2023	5 minutes of social time
April 18, 2023	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! Our upcoming Nuggets:

November 15, 2022

Digging Deeper: Discovering Women In Nevada Mining

by Dana Bennett

Meeting ID:828 6254 9789 Password: MHA

January 17, 2023

A Visit to Helgustaðanáma, Iceland's Historic Spar Mine

by Johnny Johnson

Meeting ID:846 9877 5787 Password: MHA

February 21, 2023

TBA

Meeting ID: 882 0873 1550 Password: MHA

March 21, 2023

Touching the Irish Famine in a 19th Century Pauper Cemetery: The Effort in Leadville, Colorado to Memorialize 1000 Irish Immigrants Buried in Sunken, Unmarked Graves

By James Walsh

Meeting ID:844 0004 6536 Password: MHA

April 18, 2023

TBA

Meeting ID:899 1358 9221 Password: MHA

The presentations will also be livestreamed on YouTube during the presentation and recorded for later viewing on the Mining History Association YouTube channel.

We also have openings for talks next spring. If you would like to give a talk, send an email to mininghistoryassociation@gmail.com .

Mining and Scientific Press, **volume 53 (July-December 1886)** **Digitized!**

The *Mining and Scientific Press* (San Francisco, 1860 – 1922) was (and still is) one of the most important mining publications of the last half of the nineteenth century. Coverage is spotty through 1864 and then the periodical run was complete until 1922 through the Press's merger with the *Engineering and Mining Journal* – save for volume 53 covering July – December 1886.

After considerable digging, MHA member Hans Muessig located a physical copy of the missing volume at the University of Minnesota. With the easing of Covid restrictions, they were finally able and willing to scan the volume in a searchable PDF format with the financial support of the Mining History Association.

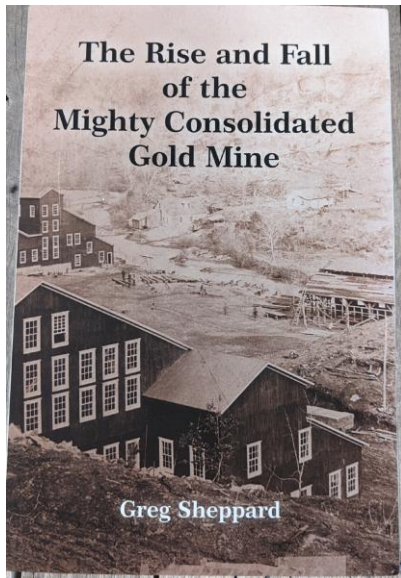
Volume 53 has joined the other volumes on The Internet Archive (archive.org). A quick search for “Mining and Scientific Press 1886) will find it there.

MEMBERSHIP BROCHURE

Included in this issue is the new MHA membership brochure! Help us get the brochures out by stopping by mining museums and sites and ask them if they would put out 10 or 20 brochures. Then email mininghistoryassociation@gmail.com with the number required and who to send them to.

Recent Publications by MHA Authors

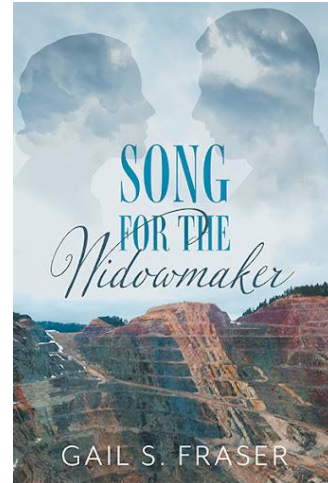
Greg Sheppard, *The Rise and Fall of the Mighty Consolidated Gold Mine*. Blairsville, GA: Straub Publishing, 2022. 190 pp, perfect binding, \$17, ISBN: 13: 978-0-9913726-5-2



In 1828 gold was discovered in the red clay hills surrounding Dahlonega, Georgia. Wrested from the Cherokee, the rich earth was panned in creeks, washed in torrents of roaring water, then drilled and blasted.

The Consolidated Gold Mine sits in the center of the most productive part of the Dahlonega gold fields. It was the largest gold mine east of the Mississippi River. By combining northern capital with western mining technology, the Consolidated Gold Mine brought expectations of a new gold rush to the North Georgia Mountains. Relive the early days from the exciting boom years to the mine's final incarnation as Dahlonega's number one attraction for visitors. Follow along as author Greg Sheppard tells the fascinating story of the events as they unfolded on the site of the Consolidated Gold Mine.

Gail S. Fraser. *Song for the Widower*. Altona, Manitoba: Friesen Press, 2022, 366 pp, soft cover, \$22.99 USD, ISBN: 9781039133839



In late 19th century Dundee, Scotland working woman dominate the labour market affording them independence unusual for the period. Men were most often unemployed. This story is about Mary Coyle and William Fraser and the challenges they face to emigrate to America. William goes to America in search of mining work. The reader journeys to South Dakota (Homestake Mine), Montana, Alaska, and Nevada (Giroux Consolidated Copper) in the late 19th and early 20th century. When his Mary finally joins him in Lead, they both face the realization that mining may leave her a widow. William and family move to copper mining camp in Nevada where a cave-in changes everything.

Alternating between perspectives, the reader experiences being a miner and being married to a miner. Fraser, originally from Minnesota, is a Professor at the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change in Toronto and conducts interdisciplinary research on extractive industries.

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Upcoming Events

Arizona History Conference

Tempe, Arizona
April 13-15, 2023

International Conference of Mining and Underground Museums (ICUM2023)

Wieliczka, Poland
May 22-25, 2023

Mining History Association Conference

Socorro, New Mexico
June 8-11, 2023

Western History Association

Los Angeles, California
October 26-29, 2023

Mining History Association Conference

Park City Utah
June 5-9, 2024

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

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

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 Barbara Clements, Membership Chair, at mininghistoryassociation@gmail.com

or

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