



Winter 2017

# Mining History News

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mining History Association

## Invisible Elephants

In my presidential address at Fairbanks, I mentioned how Western and mining themes depicted in movies, television, and books had a strong influence on me as a youngster. From 1933 to 1977, Muriel Sibell Wolle, artist and once head of the Fine Arts Department at University of Colorado, wrote several books about ghost towns and mining camps in the West. These included, "Stampede to Timberline", "Bonanza Trail", and "Montana Pay Dirt". Wolle's books were filled with sketches of decaying mining camps and towns. Most of these places are very, very different today. Largely through Wolle's books and other media I became interested in history, painting, art, and mining.

Through Brain Leach's, "Digging's Degree of Difficulty: The Changing Portrayal of Mining Labor in Movies and Games," and Tetiana Soviak's, "Real Man's Work as Entertainment: Spike TV's Coal," MHA conference attendees learned of the rather strange images conveyed regarding mining and mineral resources "re-generation" as presented through the lenses of modern video games and reality TV. So, last September, when I discovered that the Denver Art Museum was having an exhibition entitled, "The Western: In Art and Film," I was excited to find out how mining would be portrayed through yet another lens.

The museum advertised this event as "the first major exhibition to examine the Western genre and its evolution from the mid-1850's to the present through fine art, film, and popular culture." It would offer a new perspective beyond cowboys, bandits, and barroom brawls. What I found was indeed a new perspective. Mining was not represented at all. Mining was an *invisible elephant* in the exhibition rooms. Did other visitors to the exhibit wonder why those many wagon trains and railroad lines were heading west? I wondered is it better that mining be seen through the distorted lens of modern media games and reality TV or

to be invisible? Nevertheless, I did enjoy the Jackson Pollack and Franz Kline paintings on exhibit. I have always liked abstract art. Perhaps that's another reason why I became an exploration geologist. I like dealing with what is more than a little bit abstract.

It was not only in "The Western: In Art and Film" where I have sensed an invisible elephant standing in our midst. I felt the presence of another large elephant within the MHA itself. This elephant is the mining history of Northeastern and the Southeastern United States. There is a rich mining history in these regions. In some areas mining goes back to colonial times and mining continues within these regions to this day. Let us reflect on these elephants a little.

When Americans think of coal mining, most don't think of Wyoming, today the nation's biggest coal producer. Most probably think of West Virginia, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania. But what does the public know of the economic history and rich culture of the great Appalachian coal belt? The coal belt stretches all the way from Pennsylvania to Alabama, and coal mining - while it has ceased in many areas - is still important in others. To better understand the current national debate about the use of coal and other fossil fuels it is important to understand what coal mining meant and means to people living along the Appalachian coal belt. There is a rich cultural history here that exists not only in buildings and landscapes but in music and oral history.

Invisible elephants are scattered throughout the hard rock mining regions of the Northeast and Southern states. Some MHA members and mineral collectors know of the world famous zinc mines at Ogdensburg and Franklin, New Jersey. A field trip went to Ogdensburg during MHA's 2005 Scranton Conference. Tennessee mining history included important copper

## Elephants...

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and zinc producing areas. Today Tennessee zinc mining operations produce a zinc concentrate that is the highest-grade in the world (62%). The copper mines at Ducktown, Tennessee, now all closed, operated over a period of more than 120 years!

Bag iron production in Virginia dates all the way back to the Jamestown settlement. Hard rock iron mining developed during the eighteenth century in places like New York and New Jersey. These were significant iron producing states for many years. Iron mining continued in New York until almost the start of twenty-first century and in New Jersey, at Dover, it only ceased in the early 1970s. Iron mining commenced in Alabama at about 1840. The Civil War saw the destruction of mining, manufacturing, and transportation infrastructure, but by the 1870s, iron mining began its ascendance. The result was that Alabama become one of the nation's leading iron and steel producers. Alabama was once the model for vertical integration in the resource industry. Most of Alabama's coal mines closed in the 1950s, but iron mining and steel production continued into the mid-1970s.

The initial discovery of gold east of the Mississippi River was made not far from Charlotte, North Carolina in 1799. The string of gold deposits and mines extends along the mountain and piedmont belts from Virginia to Alabama. The Southeast, not California, was the site of our nation's first major gold rush. The greatest concentration of gold mines was in the piedmont region of the Carolinas and Georgia. Prior to the discovery of gold in California in 1848, no state produced more gold than Georgia. The Philadelphia was the site of the US mint, but in 1835 branch mints were established in Charlotte, North Carolina and in Dahlonega, Georgia to produce gold coinage only. Of the hundreds of thousands of people that stampeded west to California and Colorado goldfields during the late 1840's and 1850s, few of the Americans had any gold mining experience with the exception of those who had worked in southern gold mines. Some of the earliest gold discoveries in Colorado are attributed to miners from Georgia.

How can we see our invisible elephant as flesh and bone? Ron Limbaugh (1998) and Erik Nordberg (2016), two past MHA presidents, and many other MHA mem-

bers commented on a desire for the MHA to be more inclusive, to reach out further to the east in contemplating conferences sites. The problems of charting and following such a course at the MHA are several. MHA is an all volunteer organization; the presidency is a one year hand at the ship's wheel; and conference sites come from proposals brought to MHA council. That means volunteers willing and able to do heavy lifting have to make a formal proposal and, if it is accepted, carry out the work necessary to fulfill the task. Having the option to use a conference organizer has sometimes been suggested and might not be a bad idea. A conference organizer should not only know how to handle logistics but should know how to get sponsors to provide the conference financial support.

Here are some suggestions going forward. To help attract members from over a broader geographical range and reach young persons as well, I believe that MHA should reach out to organizations that likely have kindred spirits within them. What comes to mind are archivist, librarian, geological, mining, historical, and educational organizations. I'm sure there are more. This doesn't have to be an onslaught, rather a gradual outreach program perhaps with some specific geographical areas of focus.

Secondly, I think MHA should set space aside in each of its quarterly newsletters and in the Journal to include an article pertaining to mining history in the northeast or southeast. Depending on space available, there might be a piece from each. I don't like a totally rigid plan.

We might start by looking at Erik Nordberg's word cloud on page 5 of the current Mining History Journal (in "Whither Mining History"). My reading of the cloud is that Erik's survey results suggest there is a strong interest in Alabama as it has many of the items of strongest interest to the 400 persons surveyed: coal, gold, Appalachian, Birmingham, and iron. Organizations such as those mentioned earlier should get contacted. From those contacts we might try to get an article or articles for the newsletter and/or the Journal. Perhaps we will find a party or organization that may want to propose a MHA conference site. It's a start, and there is a focus.

Peter Maciulaitis

## Future Candidates for MHA Leadership

### *Candidate for VP/President Elect:*

#### **Stephanie Saager-Bourret**

**Biography:** I am honored to have been nominated as the next Vice President/President Elect of the Mining History Association, with the opportunity to further the work of our group. Having been a member since 1997, I have had the opportunity to meet and learn from many of you. I currently serve on the Besleme-Orrell Heritage Award committee, have served a term on council, and am on the program committee for the upcoming Marquette MHA meeting. I just recently completed a 32-year career as Curator of The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums in Platteville, Wisconsin. Not knowing a thing about mining of any kind when I took the job, I was fortunate to have many good teachers along the way. I have gained a huge amount of respect for all who have pursued mining as a vocation (and obsession!) over the decades. I have also gained respect for the institutions and individuals who work to preserve mining heritage. Preservation of sites, structures, artifacts, photographs, archives, and memories has always been, and will continue to be, a challenge. I look forward to helping the Association further its goals, and look for new ways to perpetuate this thing that we love called mining history.

### *Candidate for Nominating Committee:*

#### **John Baeten**

**Biography:** John Baeten is an interdisciplinary archaeologist with a PhD in Industrial Heritage and Archaeology. His research is focused on the intersection of mining technology and the environment, particularly as they relate to the

development, and contested histories of reclamation and remembrance within abandoned and post-mining landscapes. As an archaeologist, John has investigated mining landscapes on public lands throughout the United States, including sites in Alaska, Arizona, South Dakota, Idaho, California, New Mexico, Minnesota, and Michigan. He is currently a research associate and instructor at Michigan Technological University, where he continues to explore historic iron mining in the Mesabi Range.

### *Candidates for Council (vote for 2):*

#### **(1) Stephen S. Hart**

**Biography:** Steve Hart is a geological engineer with 45 years in government employment and private consulting. His education at the Colorado School of Mines and Texas A&M University was followed by 12 years with the U.S. Geological Survey and Colorado Department of Natural Resources. His work as a reviewer of Mined Land Reclamation and Radioactive Source Material permit applications led to consulting on radioactive waste cleanup projects at uranium mines and mills, Superfund lead-zinc-silver smelter remediation projects, and coal mine subsidence mapping. Steve's work has taken him to every Western state, including Alaska, and to Asia and South America. In the late 1990's, Steve taught a graduate course in "Case Histories in Engineering Geology and Hydrogeology" as a part-time adjunct at the Colorado School of Mines. He retired from URS Corporation (now AECOM), the world's largest engineering design firm, and then worked as an independent consultant through 2010.

**(2) David Valentine**

**Biography:** Dave Valentine is a historic archaeologist that has been working in the western United States for over thirty years in both government and the private sectors. He became interested in the archaeology and history of mining early in his career, and completed a master's degree in historic archaeology in 1999 writing a thesis on an overseas Chinese placer mining village in Northern Nevada. He has experience serving on other boards, including the Nevada Archaeological Association where he served as secretary and newsletter editor, and the Idaho Archaeological Society as the current treasurer. A long-time member of the MHA, he has previously been a member of the nominating committee.

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## 2018 Mining History Association Ballot

Mail ballot by March 15, 2018 to:

**Mining History Association**

**Rebecca Lange**

**P.O. Box 6356**

**Boise, ID 83707**

Vice President/President Elect (one-year term beginning June 2018). Vote for one:

Stephanie Saager-Bourret  Write in: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominating Committee (one position, three-year term beginning June 2018)

Vote for one:

John Baeten  Write in: \_\_\_\_\_

Council (two positions with three-year terms beginning June 2018)

Vote for two:

Stephen S. Hart  Write in: \_\_\_\_\_

David Valentine

A note from our estimable webmaster, Mike Kaas:

## **Bet You Didn't Have Time to See Everything in Alaska...**

**Even if you added an ocean cruise, a visit to the Kenai or Denali, or joined the Salmon Derby on Ship Creek in Anchorage, we bet you didn't have time to see everything.**



On a walking tour of the historic Kennecott Mine townsite and the huge mill (above) Johnny and Dawn Johnson and Dick and Elna Hauck took this photo. They took a side trip there while they were on the way to Fairbanks. Sitting alongside the Kennicott and Root Glaciers the iconic red mill received copper ore via tramways from mines located miles away on the precipitous ridge tops. The site is now located in the Wrangel St. Elias National Park.

**The web galleries from the Fairbanks Conference contain over 200 photos! See if you can find yourself at the social events and visit some of the historic sights and attractions that you may have missed. <http://www.mininghistoryassociation.org/FairbanksConference.htm>**

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## **EXCITING AND IMPORTANT NOTICE**

*You can now easily renew for your MHA membership online!  
Visit [mininghistoryassociation.org](http://mininghistoryassociation.org) and click membership icon  
for instructions on joining or renewing via credit card or Paypal...*

## Reminder: Research Grant Proposals due in April

The Mining History Association (MHA) Research Grant Program is open to all who are currently engaged in or who plan to conduct mining history research, including graduate students, academic scholars, public sector professionals in related disciplines, independent scholars, writers, and educators. Research may focus on technology, business, social and cultural life, the environment, or any other aspect of mining, its associated industries, and its communities. It may concentrate on any era or geographical location. The MHA does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, age, national origin, sexual orientation or disability.

Funds are awarded on a competitive basis. The Grants Committee, at its discretion, may make up to three grants per year. Funding may vary, up to a maximum of \$750 per grant. The amount of each award will be determined by the Grants Committee on the basis of available funding, the grant criteria as indicated below, and on individual budget priorities. Announcement of the winner(s) will be made by the end of May 2018, so that funds may be used in preparation for the MHA Annual Conference in the year following the award (Marquette, Michigan in June 2019).

To be eligible for funding, applicants must submit the following before midnight on April 15, 2018 to BrianLeech@augustana.edu: 1. One complete Application Form (Download as an MS-Word file) or (Download the application form as a PDF file). 2. A resumé/vita with personal information relevant to the proposal.

For further details please visit <http://www.mininghistoryassociation.org/ResearchGrant.htm>

### **Good News from Steve Whittington of the National Mining Hall of Fame!**

*After three years of planning, obtaining funding, staffing changes, and a few different iterations, Curator Stephanie Johnson completed renovation of the coal exhibit at the National Mining Hall of Fame and Museum in Leadville, Colorado. Buried Sunlight: Coal Mining in America opened with a Happy Hour Reception on June 15th, 2017. With guidance from the original exhibition proposal the room was transformed into an interpretive exhibition with five interactive components (a chalkboard wall, a music listening station, a touch screen monitor playing modern mining videos, a drawing station to create your own reclaimed mine site, and a space to test your knowledge and put the coal forms in the right order of formation), text panels showing the story of coal mining in America through pictures, text, and first person quotes, and objects from the collection.*

*The exhibition leads the visitor in with the introduction of coal—what it is and how it forms. The introduction text panel discusses the forms of coal with a display case showing the four types of coal. There are a few fossils to put into context how long ago coal began to form. From here the visitor goes through the history of coal mining in America, then into the health and safety sections, and then finally into the modern mining section. As visitors leave this exhibition, they walk through the 19th-century coal mine reproduction.*

# Centenary Commemoration of James Douglas

## From the desk of past MHA President Bill Culver:

A series of institutions in Canada and the United States are planning various events to commemorate the centenary of James Douglas' death. The motivations differ, but all believe he deserves to be remembered for his contributions to Canadian culture, Arizona's economic development, to mining and metallurgy, and to civil society. Uniting these events, a digital poster listing all activities will be distributed by each institution.

A group of mining professionals, historians, and "Friends of Douglas" emerged over the last five years to consider how to best carry out a "centenary commemoration." A number of commemoration projects were considered. As of December 2017, of the items considered, two events seem firm: 1) A research session at the June 2018 MHA meeting in Deadwood, South Dakota, and 2) some sort of lecture(s) in August at Extraction 2018 conference in Ottawa. This is a joint meeting of Canadian and U.S. metallurgists <<http://www.metsoc.org/extraction2018/>>.

The intention of the 2018 commemoration is to further honor Douglas' contributions to the several mineral industry engineering professions, in addition to recognizing his writing about the industry and the world in general. He believed that great engineers need a liberal arts education, and at the turn of the 20th Century suggested mining engineers learn Spanish. Below are a few notes from his life:

James Douglas is known in the 21st century as one of those great individuals whose name is on buildings, endowments, and awards. The most prestigious award for a North American metallurgist (non-ferrous) is TMS/SME's James Douglas Gold Medal, established in 1922 by the AIME. Among other donations, he established the AIME James Douglas Library Fund, intended to support the original Engineering Societies Library.

He made significant contributions to both Queen's and McGill Universities, as did his family after Douglas' passing. At Queen's, where Douglas earned his BA in 1858, he served as Chancellor 1915-1918, endowed the first Chair in Canada for Canadian history, and funded a major portion of a new Queen's library. At McGill, the family funded the Douglas dormitory years after the man's passing. He was also a benefactor for his beloved Literary and Historical Society of Quebec.

In his era, James Douglas was known as a great metallurgist, but what he originally accomplished is today a faded memory. In the 21st Century, as hydrometallurgy of copper becomes a major approach for extraction of the metal from its ore, it is worth remembering Douglas' experiments in the Eastern Townships of Quebec in the 1860s. There is a case to be made that Douglas and his long-time business and science partner, T. Sterry Hunt, developed the first modern commercial process for treating low-grade copper sulfides. Soon after their 1869 patent was filed, a handful of Chilean investors beta-tested the Hunt & Douglas Process at their bornite mine just north of Santiago. This was first company to use the process subsequent to the Harvey Hill prototype. Douglas considered his months consulting in Chile as his graduate seminar in mining – Chile is where he learned mining could be a business and not just a speculation. In Chile he learned that it was the quantity of ore, not the quality, that counted. He applied these lessons in Arizona, and emerged as the leading force in creating the Phelps Dodge Corporation.

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## **Upcoming Events**

### **Business History Conference**

5-7 April 2018  
Baltimore, MD

### **2018 Mining History Association Conference**

7-10 June 2018  
Deadwood, SD

### **The World Mining Congress**

19-22 June 2018  
Astana City, Kazakhstan

### **Australasian Mining History Association**

8-12 October 2018  
Cromwell, South Island, New Zealand

### **2019 Mining History Association Conference**

5-9 June 2019  
Marquette, MI

*The Mining History News* is published quarterly by the Mining History Association. It is sent to MHA members who also receive the annual *Mining History Journal*. MHA is an organization of individuals interested in the history of mining and metallurgy. Submissions for the newsletter are encouraged and should be sent to Nathan Delaney, [nathan.delaney@case.edu](mailto:nathan.delaney@case.edu),

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

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

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