



Mining History News

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mining History Association

A Publication of the Mining History Association

Winter 2025/26

Presidential Pickings

Greetings to all. There are lots of things to peruse in this issue of the newsletter. I'll start by sharing some news on the latest happenings within the MHA. We held a rare, mid-year board meeting in late November to address some issues that couldn't wait until the June meeting. First was to conditionally approve Houghton, MI as the venue for our 2027 annual meeting. This will be a joint meeting with the Society for Industrial Archeology (SIA). The SIA is headquartered on the campus of Michigan Tech University, in the heart of Michigan's Copper Country. The Houghton area offers dozens of mining tour options, so many in fact that some people will probably want to come early or stay late to enjoy all there is to see and do up there (full disclosure: MTU is my alma mater which makes me a little biased to visit the area).

The second issue we looked at was changing the bylaws to amend the term of MHA president, and by extension vice-president, from one year to two years. Last June the MHA board formed a Bylaw committee to investigate the matter, and they initiated a good discussion with pros and cons being tossed around. No final decision was made, and the topic will be brought up again in Pittsburg 2026. Some of the driving factors for this change is to ease the nominating process and give the president more time to fit into the role and adequately perform their duties.

And speaking of duties, this issue contains the slate of candidates vying to fill some upcoming vacancies – Vice-President/President-elect, two Council seats, and a seat on the Nominating committee. I thank everyone that is willing to step into these roles and volunteer their time. We still have openings for the jobs of Secretary and Web Manager. And I again ask all members to please think about contributing to an organization that you care about. It can be very rewarding.

While idling in the office waiting for the government to reopen, I got to research Nevada's Bare Mountain mining district. The most productive mineral to come from the district was fluorspar, a critical mineral needed during WWII. Several thousand tons were mined and shipped to steel mills on the west coast. It was the largest fluorspar provider to those mills, yet the mine was a small family affair with just a dozen or so employees. Such a small operation making an enormous impact to the war effort reminds me that size isn't always reflective of importance. I look forward to visiting the site before year's end.

Lastly, as I write this *Pickings* we got our first heavy snow in the Sierra and the ski hills have opened. Reno is soaking wet and feels like a damp fall, telling me that winter is fast approaching. This is my last *Pickings* of the year so I want to close by wishing everyone a very peaceful holiday season, good tidings, and Happy New Year.

Yours,

Robert McQueen

MHA Officers and Nominations Committee Report

The Nominating Committee has been busy identifying candidates for VP / President-elect, the MHA Council (two positions), and the Nominating Committee. Thank you to Bill Culver, Ginny Kilander, and Karen Jass for their hard work on this important task. The Committee has identified a candidate for each position, and a brief biography for each candidate is included below. As always, you are free to write-in candidates but please note that any write-in candidate should be willing to serve if selected. Any questions about the qualifications needed for any of the positions can be addressed by Bill Culver (culverww@plattsburgh.edu).-This year's ballot can be found at the top of page **seven (7)** of this newsletter listing the positions with the nominated candidates for each position with room for any write-in candidates. You may vote for one candidate for VP / President and one candidate for the Nominating Committee by selecting the nominated individual or writing in a candidate of your own choosing if that person is also willing to serve. The individuals receiving the majority of votes cast will be elected to those positions. In the case of the two Council positions, you may vote for up to two candidates in a similar fashion. The two Council candidates receiving the highest vote totals will be elected to the Council to serve until 2029. *Ballots must be mailed as directed by February 28, 2026 in order to be counted.*

Nominated for the position of Vice President / President-elect is **Brian Leech**

Brian Leech served as Secretary of the Mining History Association for 15 years. He stepped down from that role, only to be quickly talked into being nominated for another position. Why did he accept a nomination? Because he values the MHA's friendly members, he knows that the organization shaped his career, and he was honored that anyone would consider him worthy of leading such an incredible group. Leech serves as Associate Professor of History at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, where he teaches courses in American history, chairs the Department of History, and directs the college's honors program. Leech's research focuses on the history of natural resources, particularly the mining industry. In 2019, his book *The City That Ate Itself: Butte, Montana and Its Expanding Berkeley Pit* (University of Nevada Press) received the MHA's biennial Clark C. Spence Award for the best book in mining history. He recently completed a book about the portrayal of mining in American popular culture, which, if nothing else, will contain a compendium of shows, movies, songs, and games so that you, too, can fill your days with mining-themed entertainment.

Nominated for the two Council positions are **Eamon McCarthy** and **Mark Hendrickson**

Eamon McCarthy grew up in southwest Ireland, where copper, slate, and barytes were mined. He has engineering degrees from University College Dublin and the University of Notre Dame. He worked for 37 years in the mining industry in the US and the UK with Cyprus Minerals, Rio Tinto, and Imerys, specializing in mineral processing, applications, and economics. He has authored chapters in the Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration (SME) handbooks on Mineral Processing and Industrial Minerals, and he received the Hardinge Award from the SME in 2024. He has a lifelong interest in history and has presented on the MHA Nuggets and the annual conference. His book *The Irish Miners* is available on Amazon. He is retired and living in California, where he enjoys gardening and fruit farming and continues to research history.

Mark Hendrickson is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of History at the University of California, San Diego. He specializes in late nineteenth and twentieth-century United States history with an emphasis on political economy, mineral supply chains, and capitalism. His recent publications explore how American mining engineers and economic geologists working abroad since the 1880s helped shape the development of 20th-century American capitalism, science, and foreign policy. He is completing the final revisions to his next book, *Never Alone: Antimony and US Mineral History in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, which will appear in the History of Science series with Johns Hopkins University Press. Mark recently held an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation New Directions Fellowship, which provided him with the opportunity to study aspects of the mining industry with scholars at Colorado School of Mines and Michigan Technological University.

Nominated for a Position on the Nominating Committee is **Mike Nelson**

Mike Nelson is a senior mining consultant at Stantec Inc. He was previously a professor of mining engineering at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (1989–1994) and the University of Utah (1999–2023), where he was Department Chair for 11 years. He holds degrees in metallurgical engineering (B.S.), applied physics (M.S.), and mining engineering (Ph.D.). He is a Distinguished Member of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration (SME). Mike contributed significantly to handbooks recently published and updated by SME, as author or co-author of four chapters in the *Mining Engineering Handbook* (2011), five in the *SME Mineral Processing and Extractive Metallurgy Handbook* (2019), and two in the *Underground Mining Handbook* (2023). Mike has worked for Kennecott Copper, Westinghouse Electric, Consolidation Coal, and EIMCO Process Equipment. He holds nine patents in mining and mineral processing technology, and has given invited short courses in the U.S.A., Australia, Ecuador, and India. He is a member of the Board of Trustees for the Utah State Trust Lands Administration.

**Join the Mining History Association in
the legendary Tri-State Mining District
at its 36th Annual Conference in Pittsburg, Kansas,
on May 28-31, 2026**

**Preliminary details available on the MHA's website at:
<https://mininghistoryassociation.org/PittsburgKS2025.htm>**

***Complete conference details and session program
forthcoming in the Spring 2026 Mining History News***



The Nuggets Program restarts on January 13th and will continue through April 14th before taking its traditional summer break. The dates for each presentation are shown on the graphic above. The MHA Nuggets program provides educational opportunities for members and an opportunity for members to connect outside of our annual conference.

Barbara is currently accepting presentation proposals so please reach out to her if you are interested in presenting. Topics can include a visit to a historic mining site or town or an interesting little topic that you happened to find out about. Email Barbara at mininghistoryassociation@gmail.com if you would like to present a MHA Nugget or if you have questions about the process or whether your proposal is appropriate for a Nugget.

Also, please like and follow our Facebook page for updates on presentation topics and feel free to view past Nuggets on the “Mining History Association” YouTube channel.

Conference Room Block

The Hampton Inn by Hilton in Pittsburg will serve as our official conference hotel. The planning committee has established a room block with a room rate of \$109 per night that also includes a full breakfast. The hotel is located at 1285 US-69, Pittsburg, KS 66762 and can be reached by telephone at [\(620\) 231-3100](tel:6202313100). A link to the hotel is also provided for your potential use below:

<https://www.hilton.com/en/book/reservation/rooms/?ctyhocn=PTSSNHX&arrivalDate=2026-05-27&departureDate=2026-05-31&groupCode=CHHMHA&room1NumAdults=1&cid=OM%2CWW%2CHILTONLINK%2CE%2C2CDirectLink>

Livermore Award Presentation

The 2025 Livermore Awards were presented to **Cindy Neely, the George Rowe Museum, and the Residents of Silver Plume, CO** for their purchase and preservation of 200 acres that include numerous former mining claims and historic sites near Silver Plume. Peter Maciulaitis delivered the medallions to the George Rowe Museum for presentation to Cindy and to the public after our Gunnison Conference.

The medallions were, appropriately, presented to Cindy at a fundraiser for the purchase and preservation of an additional 350 acres on Republican Mountain known as the Taylor-Kennedy property.



According to Lily Redfield, the presentation of the medallions to Cindy by her husband Ryan Redfield (shown above) set a festive tone for the kickoff of a new fundraising event. To learn more about or donate to the Silver Plume Mountain Park Expansion Project, please visit their site at spmptk.com.

Anthracite Mining Heritage Month

The 25th Anthracite Mining Heritage Month will take place in January of 2026. At times spreading across two months, the current program continues to be developed but currently includes a presentation by the Huber Breaker Preservation Society, the Msgr. John J. Curran Lecture by Mitch Troutman at King's College, and the annual Knox Mine Disaster Commemoration at the Anthracite Heritage Museum in Scranton. For more information on the many events commemorating key aspects of the hard coal industry in the East, please visit <https://www.anthracitemuseum.org/amhm/>

Historical Marker Update

In September 2025, MHA received notification that the Pennsylvania Historical Marker Commission approved the MHA nomination of a marker recognizing Dr. James Douglas and the Chemical Copper Company for producing the first electrolytic copper in the Western Hemisphere.

For a little background, the MHA Board passed a resolution in Socorro (2023) nominating Dr. Douglas and the Chemical Copper Company for Pennsylvania's roadside Historical Marker Program. Submission of the nomination was pending the reopening of the program, which had been suspended during a reorganization. In November 2024, the Marker Program reopened, and the MHA nomination application was submitted early in 2025, accompanied by a nomination letter from MHA President Eric Clements. The Canadian Historical Metallurgy Committee of the Metallurgical Society sent a support letter, signed by the Committee chair, Engin Özberk.

The Proposed Marker Title:

Chemical Copper Company's Electrolytic Copper Refinery

The Marker Location / Municipality:

Phoenixville, Bridge Street at the Schuylkill River, near the entrance to the Phoenixville train station.

The Proposed Marker Text:

The Chemical Copper Company, incorporated in 1875, is considered to have operated the first electrolytic copper refinery in the Western Hemisphere just south of here. Electrolytic refining was added to the existing hydrometallurgical plant using the Hunt and Douglas Copper Process. Dr. James Douglas engineered the electrolytic refinery as an innovative way to extract copper metal from the process solution. The company failed after an 1880 plant fire, as did Charles Wheatley's adjoining Schuylkill Copper Works.

What is ahead? The Phoenixville Historical Society is handling logistics in Phoenixville. The Marker Program will pay for producing the marker and shipping it to the Historical Society. The Historical Society will obtain the property owner's permission to place the marker. It seems the site owner is the Phoenixville Municipality. MHA bears the nominal responsibility for any installation costs, but any MHA contribution will be optional. Canadians who favor recognition for Dr. James Douglas, along with a few descendants of Dr. Douglas, will most likely cover the installation costs. In a year or so, a dedication ceremony needs to be scheduled.

Iron and Steel Heritage Forum

The SIA recently recognized the Iron and Steel Heritage Forum as its first special interest group as one way of creating and maintaining a community interested in the heritage of iron and steel. Topics of interest to the Forum include metallurgy, mining; iron making technology; transportation networks; "interesting" users and uses of iron and steel; business history; labor and union history; art & photography; and steel and iron museums and historic sites. The Forum's geographical range is North America: Canada, United States and Mexico.

Initial activities included the development of a mailing list and monthly talks on iron and steel. Talks are currently scheduled through early 2026 and they are always looking for potential speakers, including speakers at SIA meetings.

Anyone interested in any aspect of iron and steel is invited to join their mailing list to receive announcements of monthly talks and other news. You can sign up for our mailing list by contacting our chairperson directly. For more information, please contact the ISHF Chairperson, Anthony Meadow at tmeadow@ferrumwest.com.

VIRTUAL TOUR OF MINING TECHNOLOGIES IN BUTTE

MHA member Fred Quivik has prepared a virtual tour of Mining Technologies, which recently went live on “Story of Butte.” Sponsored by Butte CPR (a preservation advocacy group in Butte, Montana) and the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives, “Story of Butte” is a website and a phone app that allows viewers to take tours, either on the ground or on their computer screens, about various themes of Butte history. When “Story of Butte” launched a couple years ago, the first few tours were of various neighborhoods, after which the sponsors started developing thematic tours, including one on Headframes of Butte (thirteen steel headframes survive on the Butte Hill), The Murder of Frank Little (Little was an Industrial Workers of the World organizer who was lynched in 1917), and the Butte Warehouse Explosion of 1895 (a warehouse fire set off illegally stored dynamite killing 58, including most of the recently professionalized Butte Fire Department).

In 2024, “Story of Butte” received grants from the Superfund Advisory and Redevelopment Trust Authority and The Foundation for Montana History to contract with experts to develop three new thematic tours: Mining Technologies, Railroads in Butte, and Superfund. The three tours focus on themes that are central to Butte history. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Butte was the world’s largest supplier of copper, and its mining industry was at the forefront of technological developments. In the early twentieth century, five major railroads served Butte, and much of their physical infrastructure survives. And the region around Butte and Anaconda comprises the largest Superfund complex in the U.S. The three tours went live in early 2025.

Quivik’s tour on Mining Technologies features twelve sites representing:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Hoisting Engines and Hoist Houses | 7. Electricity |
| 2. Headframes | 8. Compressed Air |
| 3. Mine Timbers | 9. Mine Ventilation |
| 4. Explosives | 10. Mine Surveying, Mine Maps, and Mine Models |
| 5. Stamp Mills | 11. Milling and Concentrating |
| 6. Open-Pit Mining and Block- Caving | 12. Smelting |

Each site on the tour is a surviving physical resource in Butte that embodies a technology. The text for the tour describes each technology more broadly, and text for each technology is accompanied by as many as eight historical photos and illustrations. Some of the technologies represented on the tour are distinct pieces of equipment, like hoist engines and headframes, and others are technological systems comprised of many components. The tour helps viewers appreciate the complexity of the technological system that the Anaconda Copper Mining Company developed to produce copper, zinc, and other metals from beneath the Butte Hill.

Late in 2025, a second thematic tour by Quivik, on the Anaconda Copper Mining Company (ACM), went live on “Story of Butte.” While the Headframes of Butte, Mining Technologies, and Superfund tours focus on facets of Butte’s landscape that are directly related to mining, the ACM tour highlights other features on Butte’s cultural landscape that were also shaped by the company. They include corporate buildings, residences of high-ranking corporate officials and of miners, the scene of the Anaconda Road Massacre in 1920, and neighborhoods developed by the ACM’s subsidiary real estate company.

Story of Butte is available to the public without paywall at <https://storyofbutte.org>. MHA members can go straight to the Mining Technologies tour at <https://storyofbutte.org/tours/show/108>. Text, maps, illustrations, and present-day and historical photos make it possible to take the tours while sitting at a computer anywhere in the world.

2025/26 Ballot

Mail by February 28, 2026 to:

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

Vice President / President Elect

☐ Brian Leech ☐ _____ (write in)

MHA Council Positions (vote for 2):

☐ Eamon McCarthy ☐ _____ (write in)
☐ Mark Hendrickson ☐ _____ (write in)

Nominating Committee:

☐ Mike Nelson ☐ _____ (write in)

2026 MHA Membership Renewal

Student: \$20, Individual: \$35, International (outside the U.S.): \$45, Sustaining: \$60, Patron: \$100

Name: _____

Business Affiliation (only if used for address) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Send with check to: Mining History Association, PO Box 1536, Cape Girardeau MO 63702-1536

OR Go to the MHA Website and use our online system and pay by credit card:

<https://mininghistoryassociation.org/member.htm>

MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

You are paid up through December of the year printed on your mailing label. If your mailing label says "2025" you need to renew for 2026.

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

Upcoming Events

Anthracite Mining Heritage Month

<https://www.anthracitemuseum.org/amhm/>
January 2026

Mining History Association Conference

Pittsburg, Kansas
May 28-31, 2026

Soc. Industrial Archeology Conference

Norfolk, VA
May 28-31, 2026

Natl. Assoc of Mining History Orgs.

Swaledale, New Yorkshire
June 19-22, 2026

Great Britain Industrial Heritage Tour

<https://www.anthracitemuseum.org/great-britain-industrial-heritage-tour-2026/>
July 30-Aug 8, 2026

Australasian Mining History Association

Smythesdale, Virginia
September 20-26, 2026

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

Submission Deadlines:

Spring issue: February 1st

Summer issue: July 1st

Fall issue: September 1st

Winter issue: December 1st

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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