



Mining History News

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mining History Association

A Publication of the Mining History Association

Fall 2023

Presidential Pickings

Over the past several years, I've written a column for the *Mining Quarterly*, which is a regional publication of the *Elko Daily Free Press* and now known as *Mining The West*. For this "Presidential Picking," I'm recycling my 2019 column about the history of women in Nevada mining and including new (old?) information located during the past four years.

Nevada's mining history features numerous men who financed, built, and operated the mines that created fortunes and developed towns across northern Nevada. We don't often think of women as having a central role in Nevada's mining industry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries – after all, mining has been one of Nevada's most masculine enterprises -- but if we look hard enough, we can find numerous Nevada women who were engaged with the mining industry.

For many women, that engagement was at a distance and did not involve moving dirt. Some Nevada women invested their own money in others' mining activities, and some Nevada women operated family businesses, which allowed their husbands the freedom to prospect and mine elsewhere.

One such investor was Battle Mountain resident Edith Williams Jenkins who financed a mill at Kennedy in Humboldt County around 1900. A widow by that time, Edith eventually built one of the largest ranching empires in the state before her death during the Spanish Flu epidemic in 1918. Another Battle Mountain woman, Nancy Greer Huntsman, operated the family business, the Capitol Hotel, while her husband searched the Nevada desert for riches. Lorenzo Dow Huntsman was one of the few such prospectors who succeeded. He made a strike that led to the development of Tuscarora and provided enough family wealth that Nancy could retire from the hotel. His prospecting ways, though, might have been the reason she divorced him in 1884.

Very few Nevada women have been recorded as owning and operating their own mines. One of the most interesting has to be Maggie E. Smith Johnson who identified herself as a "mine owner" in the 1900 and 1910 censuses. Born a slave in Louisiana in the 1850s, Maggie moved to Nevada after the Civil War, and by 1890, she was living in the Cortez Mining District near Mt. Tenabo as the common-law wife of Hank Smith. After completing her household chores, she prospected in the nearby hills and soon located a rich silver vein. Maggie appears to have become a full-time prospector and miner after Smith's death. Records indicate that she employed as many as five men on various operations. In the first 13 years of the 20th century, newspaper notices recorded that she, sometimes alone and sometimes with partners, filed notices on or sold nearly 30 mining claims. Maggie died in 1924 and was buried in Eureka County.

Some Nevada women were prospectors, traveling out into the Nevada desert in search of gold, silver, and other minerals, and often with their husbands. Perhaps the most famous prospecting Nevada couple was Jim and Belle Butler. Jim Butler has long been celebrated as the founder of Tonopah. But it was his wife, Isabella (Belle) McCormick Donohue Butler, who staked the claims that became the famous Mizpah Mine, one of the richest producing mines in Tonopah. Belle became known as the "Mother of Nevada."

In the 1920s, Maym Schweble operated the mine she owned with her husband near Ione in Nye County. A highly respected prospector, Maym was elected to the Nevada Legislature in 1924 when she was 50 years old. Maym officially listed her occupation as “prospector” and served on the Assembly Committee on Mines and Mining. Ten years later, the Yerington newspaper featured a brief, glowing article about her under the headline “Lady In Nevada Best Prospector.”

“Folks, meet Mrs. Maym Schweble,” the article began, “one of the outstanding woman prospectors in Nevada.” Continuing, “few old time mining men need any introduction to Mrs. Schweble who has been developing mining properties in this state for the past 35 years.” “I can still handle a muck stick with the best of them,” she boasted. “I’ve prospected all over Nevada, kicked all the rocks out of most of the old trails for the past 35 years.” The reporter recalled that she had been one of the most “dynamic” members of the state assembly.

In the 1930s, Alma Irene True staked claims in the Leonard Creek Mining District and was known to do some prospecting while operating a freighting business between Winnemucca and Midas. Irene was known for her big diamond earrings and even bigger personality. She claimed to have transported the most valuable shipment of ore out of the Gold Circle Mining District. On a return trip into the district, her sedan broke down on a hill above Midas. After the residents trudged up the hill to fetch their mail and groceries, the story goes that Irene patted the old car, shot it through the hood with her pearl-handled revolver, and left it to rust in the sagebrush.

Irene still owned mining claims in the Midas area in the late 1950s and told a friend that she was holding them in anticipation of an increase in the price of gold. When Irene passed away in Reno in 1966, the price of gold still hovered around \$34 where it had been for more than three decades. Nevada miners shared an unshakeable optimism, regardless of gender.

A few women appeared to have been fully accepted by their male colleagues. When Ellemarie Morgan Putnam Wickham passed away in 1958 in California, *Western Mining and Industrial News* intoned that “a long shadow falls across western mining as death calls ... one of the industry’s most distinguished and best loved personalities.” The *News* explained that “this unusually gifted and talented woman made a major contribution to the gold mining industry of the western States in all of its phases, in hard rock mining, in dredging and in the exploration and development of the gold bearing channels of the ancient rivers of the Sierra Nevadas, both by drifting and by hydraulicking.” Ellemarie also operated a mine near Winnemucca and grubstaked prospectors in both California and Nevada.

Elizabeth Collins also died in 1958 at her shack near Jungo in Pershing County where she had been working, mostly by herself, for three decades. The Reno newspaper article about her death claimed she was “one of the last women prospectors” in the area.

As it turned out, Elizabeth was not the last. Today, Nevada women hold positions of responsibility throughout the industry. As geologists, women still search for and identify new deposits. Women work as heavy equipment operators, metallurgists, engineers, hydrologists, environmental scientists, and general managers. Women can be found in the front offices, in executive suites, and on corporate boards. Nevada women have a vibrant history and promising future in Nevada mining.

Dana Bennett, MHA President 2023-2024
Midas, Nevada
nevada.historian@gmail.com

Make Plans to be in Park City in 2024

After nearly 35 years convening MHA conferences in historic mining venues elsewhere, we are extremely pleased to finally bring our annual meeting to Utah. This long-overdue visit to the historic Park City environs (and other storied Utah mining camps) is shaping up to be a must-attend event.

In partnership with the Friends of Ski Mountain Mining History, the Utah SHPO, and other key sponsors, MHA 2024 – Park City will offer a full schedule of formal sessions, memorable field trips, an array of vendors, and a variety of social events in these new (to MHA) and exciting surroundings. Our conference headquarters is the conveniently located DoubleTree Yarrow Resort (<https://www.yarrowhotelparkcity.com/>), where we have secured a block of rooms at an attractive conference rate of \$169/night (Resort Fee incl.). Those wishing to book rooms now may call DoubleTree reservations at (435) 649-7000. (Be sure to request the Mining History Association group rate.)

The 2024 conference will begin the evening of Wednesday, June 5, with an official Park City Welcome at the historic Miners Hospital building. Our Park City field trip will depart bright and early Thursday morning -- followed by the traditional MHA reception, and formal sessions that will commence Friday morning, June 7. A full program will appear in the Spring issue of the *Mining History News*.



Park City Miners Hospital

While this past winter's record snowfalls were not kind to Utah's historic mining infrastructure, substantially everything we have planned to see in 2024 has survived – and NOW is the time to see it. Thus, we are eagerly looking forward to the variety

of field trips now in the works. In addition to the pre-conference bus tour of notable mine sites and structures in and around Park City (led by the Friends), we will offer a full-day bus trip to Eureka and the remarkable mines of the East Tintic – including the Chief Consolidated and the Eagle/Blue Bell (led by Ian Wright of Utah's Cultural Site Stewardship Program), a walking tour of Park City's historic Glenwood Cemetery (led by Park City Historical Museum staff), and a likely post-conference field trip to several significant coal mining and railroading sites in the scenic canyon country of the Helper and Price environs.



Interior of Chief Consolidated Hoist / Compressor House

We expect these tours and trips will be extremely popular and may “sell out” as space will be limited on all tours and trips. Watch for detailed registration materials to appear here first in the Spring issue (and, later, on-line). Register promptly to avoid missing this opportunity to visit these sites.

The pieces are falling into place nicely for what we are confident will be a “corker” (as Eric Clements would say) of a conference. We look forward to welcoming all of you to Utah and its spectacular mining history in 2024!

Don't Miss it! Questions? Contact Mark or Lynn at lynn.langenfeld52@gmail.com or (608) 938-4142.

Attention Potential Conference Vendors

Vendor tables will be available on Friday and Saturday, June 7 & 8, at \$35 per table. The tables will be in an area upstairs from the conference session room via an adjacent stairway or an elevator. Approximately 15 tables can be secured in this room. There is also an unsecured area outside the room available to additional vendors or for poster sessions. Potential vendors should contact Bob Otto: rotto@spe.midco.net or 605-269-1952 by April 1, 2024, for more information or to RSVP.

Call for Presentations

34th Annual Conference Mining History
Association
Park City, Utah - June 5-9, 2024

The 2024 Program Committee of the Mining History Association invites proposals for individual presentations or complete sessions (including a chair) on any topic or aspect of the history of mining, its associated industries, and its communities. There are no temporal or geographic limits to topic material. Presentations that address the mining history of Park City or of Utah in general are, however, particularly welcome given the location of the conference. Sessions normally include three papers of twenty minutes each. All presenters must register for the conference. Proposals should include the title of the presentation, an abstract (not to exceed 500 words) for each presentation, and biographical information about each presenter, including their mailing/email address. Please send the written proposals via email attachments to Brian Leech at brianleech@augustana.edu by Friday, January 5, 2024. Submission by email is required.

The program committee will also give out two conference travel grants of \$750 each to defray the costs of attendance at this year's MHA conference. Current students (including graduate students) and former students are potentially eligible for a travel grant. To be eligible, former students need to have graduated within three years of their application for funding. ***Travel grant recipients must give a presentation at the conference.*** To be considered for a conference travel grant, submit a cover letter addressed to the MHA Park City Program Committee, along with your proposal by Friday, January 5, 2024 to brianleech@augustana.edu. In that cover letter, the applicant should express their interest in the grant opportunity, what they hope to gain out of their conference attendance, and what significance their presentation is to mining history as a field.

In Memoriam

Past MHA President Ronald Limbaugh passed away on August 13th. Professor Limbaugh taught at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California where he was Professor of History, Director of Holt-Atherton Pacific Center for Western Studies, and Director of the John Muir Center for Regional Studies. He specialized in environmental history, mining history, and California history. He currently holds the record for the most MHA Journal articles (8) authored by a non-editor contributor.

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, Peter Maciulaitis, and Richard Reid currently service as the MHA's Nominating Committee.

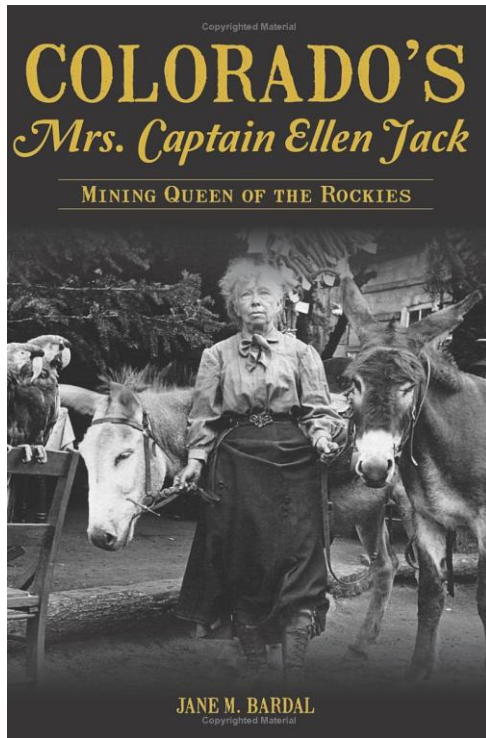
To survive, the MHA needs volunteers like you that bring their own expertise and ideas forward for the good of the organization. The Council meets face-to-face once a year at the annual conference and via email or zoom the rest of the year, as needed.

The Nominating Committee is currently accepting nominations for MHA Vice President taking office in Park City and assuming the Presidency in Gunnison; three positions on the MHA Council (each are three-year terms); and one position on the Nominating Committee (also a three-year term). Please consider nominating someone or putting yourself forward as a candidate.

If you have any interest in filling any of the open positions, please contact Stephen Hart (stephen_hart45@msn.com) with any questions you may have about the positions. He will also gladly accept any nominations you have to offer.

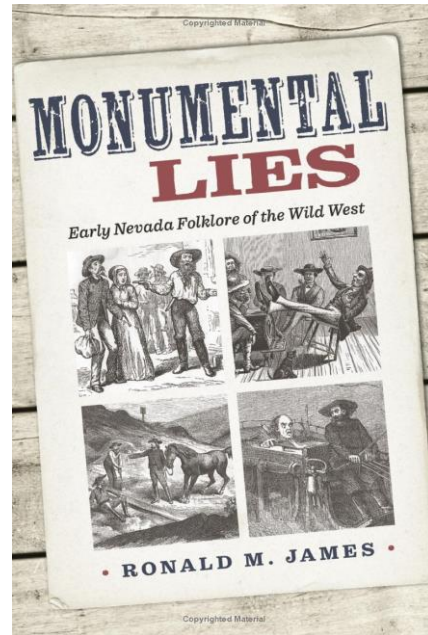
Recent Publications by MHA Authors

Jane M. Bardal, *Colorado's Mrs. Captain Ellen Jack: Mining Queen of the Rockies*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2023. Paperback, \$23.99, ISBN-13: 978-1467153638



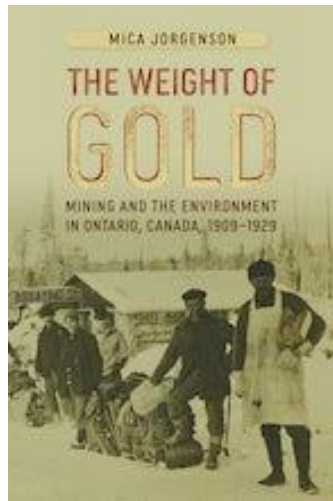
"You get off this property!" Captain Ellen Jack backed up her orders with a shotgun as she stood at the entrance to her Black Queen Mine. To profit from the mine, located near Aspen, Colorado, she engaged in many other battles with lawyers and capitalists who tried to wrest her ore away. Mrs. Captain Jack contributed to the myth of the West by crowning herself as the "Mining Queen of the Rockies" as she entertained tourists at her roadhouse near Colorado Springs. Author Jane Bardal offers a captivating biography of a pioneering woman who fashioned a legacy through true tenacity and maybe even a few tall tales.

Ronald M. James. *Monumental Lies: Early Nevada Folklore of the Wild West*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2023. 272 pages. ISBN: 1647791162



Mining is at the heart of this overview of the birth of western folk traditions in the wake of gold and silver rushes beginning in 1849. *Monumental Lies* identifies four cornerstones that were critical to how regional folklore emerged. While the first of these is deceit, famously manifesting as the tall tale, mining is another, for the industry was key to how the West took shape in the second half of the nineteenth century. The other two cornerstones, dramatic population change and the diverse international character of those who arrived, were a direct consequence of the industry. Without mining, the story of western folklore would have been very much different. As the story continues to the present day, the effect of mining reverberates as characters from the past, including the silver baron John Mackay, assume their places in local lore.

Mica Jorgenson. *The Weight of Gold: Mining and the Environment in Ontario, Canada, 1909-1929*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2023. 268 pages. Hardcover, \$39.95, ISBN 9781647791049

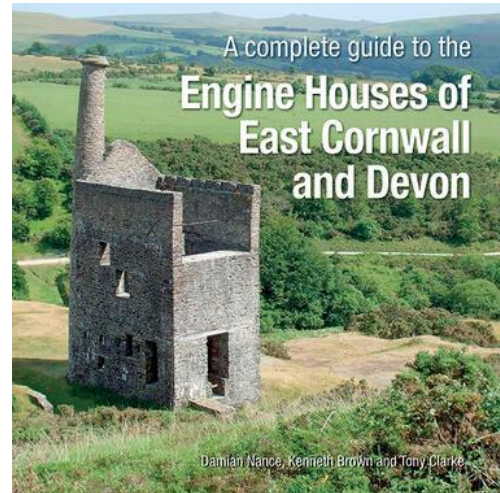


Mining in North America has long been criticized for its impact on the natural environment. Mica Jorgenson's *The Weight of Gold* explores the history of Ontario, Canada's rise to prominence in the gold mining industry, while detailing a series of environmental crises related to extraction activities. In Ontario in 1909, the discovery of exceptionally rich hard rock gold deposits in the Abitibi region in the north precipitated industrial development modeled on precedents in Australia, South Africa, and the United States. By the late 1920s, Ontario's mines had reached their maturity, and in 1928, Minister of Mines Charles McRae called Canada "the mineral treasure house to [the] world."

The Mining History Journal

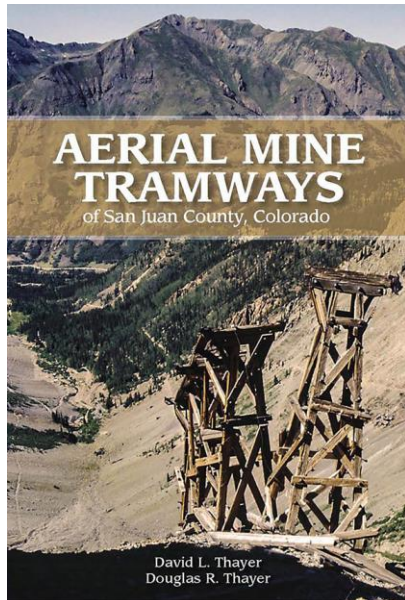
Receiving a copy of the *The Mining History Journal* is one of the many benefits of being an MHA member. Journal Editor Eric Clements reports that the newest issue of *Journal* is at the press and predicts that this issue will be a "real corker." To make sure you receive your copy of this year's (and future year's) *Journal*, please double check your membership status on your mailing labels and/or renew if necessary.

Damian Nance, Kenneth Brown and Tony Clarke. *A Complete Guide to the Engine Houses of East Cornwall and Devon*. Gloucestershire: Lightmoor Press, 2023. 152 pages. Perfect Bound, £22.50.



Nowhere has metal mining been of greater importance than it has in Cornwall and West Devon. During the 19th century, Cornwall and West Devon produced most of the world's copper and tin, as well as substantial quantities of lead, silver, arsenic, tungsten, zinc, iron, and uranium. 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. Although few of these great engines survive, many of the buildings in which they were once housed remain to this day, forming characteristic features of the Cornish and West Devon landscape that have come to symbolize the county's rich mining heritage and now stand as silent monuments to the mining industry for which these counties were once justly famous. This book introduces these remarkable engine houses by providing an illustrated guide to those in East Cornwall and Devon 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.

Douglas R. Thayer and David L. Thayer. *The Aerial Mine Tramways of San Juan County, Colorado*. Silverton, CO: San Juan County Historical Society, 2023. 400 pages, \$29.95, ISBN 9780967147932.



The mining districts in San Juan County, Colorado (the smallest Colorado County) likely contained the highest concentration of aerial tramways in the State. *The Aerial Mine Tramways of San Juan County, Colorado* presents a comprehensive guide to the industrial archeology of the 62 known aerial tramways located in San Juan County, Colorado, and brief histories of the mines associated with them. In addition to the historical and industrial archeological material, a separate front section is devoted to the characteristics of the types of tramways found in the County, for those unfamiliar with aerial tram technology.

Your Membership Status

There have been many questions about paid memberships and membership status. You can find your paid through membership year on the mailing labels for this newsletter and the MHA Journal. It is the number under your name. You are paid up through December of the year shown.

MHA Nuggets	8:00 pm Eastern 7:00 pm Central 6:00 pm Mountain 5:00 pm Pacific
August 15 September 19 October 17 November 14	5 minutes of social time 20/25 minute presentation Questions/social time
Zoom Meeting, Passcode: MHA OR LiveStream on YouTube Mining History Association channel	



The Nuggets program resumed earlier this fall. More Nuggets will be offered in October and November with limited presentation and login information for each program listed below.

Barbara is currently scheduling speakers for 2024 and has openings in January, March April, and May. Topics do not need to be academic in nature. Topics can include a visit to a historic mining site or town or an interesting little topic that you happened to find out about. Send an email to mininghistoryassociation@gmail.com if you would like to present an MHA Nugget or if you have questions about the process.

October 17, 2023

841 9530 2092

Raise, Lift, Elevate: The Soudan

Underground Mine #8 Shaft Rehabilitation Project

Sarah Guy-Levar

November 14, 2023

839 6335 4588

"The British Hollow Lead Smelter: A Cautionary Tale."

Tracey Roberts

The presentations will also be livestreamed on YouTube during the presentation and recorded for later viewing on the Mining History Association YouTube channel. To utilize the chat features or ask questions during or after the program, you should login using Zoom.

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

Upcoming Events

Australasian Mining History Conference
Reefton, South Island, New Zealand
October 15-22, 2023

Western History Association
Los Angeles, California
October 26-29, 2023

National Miner's Day
December 6, 2023

Mining History Association Conference
Park City Utah
June 5-9, 2024

Mining History Association Conference
Gunnison, Colorado
June 11-16, 2025

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 15th

Spring issue: February 15th

Summer issue: June 15th

Fall issue: September 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 Barbara Clements, Membership Chair, at mininghistoryassociation@gmail.com

or

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