



Winter 2008-9

# *Mining History News*

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mining History Association

## **Mining History Research in the Computer Age**

Living west of the San Andreas Fault 100 miles north of San Francisco has its scenic charms, but getting to good libraries and archival institutions sometimes can be difficult, especially in bad weather. To be sure, the computer age makes long-distance research from home not only possible but highly desirable, provided power is available. Sometimes it's not. Last winter the power was out for 2 days where I live, and the winter before we had no power for nearly 4 days. Working in the cold by the low voltage of a generator is not the most conducive research environment. Fortunately, weather bad enough to knock out electricity doesn't happen often here, so I can do most of my work in my home office. One sure sign of a digitally-dependent researcher is a reminder posted just above my computer screen: "make frequent backups!"

Anyone engaged in mining history research will welcome free websites that make it possible without leaving home to quickly find information, and to explore the mining-related collections of major libraries and archives. My "favorites" tab lists dozens of useful sites I can access simply by clicking on the web address (URL). Rather than risk leaving out important collections by trying to compile a comprehensive list, I have only cited below, in random order, a few examples of free sites I used this last year in working on a book tentatively titled: "Tungsten in Peace and War."

### **FREE WEBSITES FOR MINING HISTORY**

#### Bureau of Mines Minerals Yearbook (1932-1993)

Courtesy of the University of Wisconsin Ecology and Natural Resources Collection

This is by far the most useful website available for historical narrative summaries and detailed data on mines and mineral resources for the period covered. Later volumes include international, as well as national and state-

by-state developments. Each volume is text-readable, fully searchable and downloadable. Available as a link from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/EcoNatRes>

#### USGS Commodity Statistics and Information

This is a starting point for finding current U.S. and world production, consumption, price, and other statistical data, as well as descriptive summaries, for all major metal and non-metal commodities. It includes links to historical data going back to the 19th century.

<http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/commodity/>

#### USGS Historical Statistics for Mineral and Material Commodities in the United States

Historical data, periodically updated, on all major commodities going back to the 19th century. Listed alphabetically, with downloadable .pdf or .xls formats. <http://minerals.usgs.gov/ds/2005/140/>

#### Historical US Inflation Rate 1914-Present

Published by a proprietary firm (Financial Trend Forecaster), this website links to easily-retrievable Consumer Price Index data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics going back to 1913, as well as other useful econometric information related to mineral commodities. <http://inflationdata.com/>

#### U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics

A government website more difficult to use than the site above, yet invaluable for anyone working on U.S. mine labor. With patience--and some luck, perhaps--one can find historical data on employment, injuries, unions, and other work-related activities.

<http://www.bls.gov/data/>

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### Mineralogy Database

For anyone interested in identification, composition, structure, chemical analysis, crystal system, and other technical data on specific minerals, this is a useful resource that contains links to related websites around the world.  
<http://webmineral.com/>

### Global Infomine

A useful proprietary site containing some free news and information on selected current mining activities around the world, particularly in Canada, Mexico and the U.S.  
<http://www.infomine.com/>

### Goldsheet Mining Directory

Another proprietary site with free access to worldwide information useful to mining historians, and with links to mines, news, commodity prices, etc.  
<http://www.goldsheetlinks.com/>

### U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstracts 1878-present

Essential for historical data on U.S. mine-related activities from the late 19th century forward. PDF downloads.  
[http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/past\\_years.html](http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/past_years.html)

### National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections

A key starting place for locating primary source mining collections at major archival institutions in the United States. Choose the "Search the OCLC Catalog" link. Not user friendly, this site searches catalog entries using Library of Congress search terms that can frustrate efforts to pin down specific locations or mines. I got 6328 "hits" by searching just the terms "mining history"; 396 using "mining history – Nevada"; 37 using "mining history – Nevada – Comstock"; and nothing by adding "Crown Point" to that string. Searching "Crown Point mine" alone brought me 13 hits, only 3 of which were relevant to the Comstock.  
<http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/>

### Wikipedia

The old computer cliché about "junk in, junk out" is still a good cautionary reminder to web searchers, but Wikipedia and Google are too valuable to overlook as informational and bibliographic tools for mining history. The Wikipedia encyclopedia has gained stature and credibility in recent years with critical review standards, open access and constant user vetting. Clicking on links from the main mining page starts the user on an extensive and rewarding

topical journey. A brief bibliography accompanies most articles.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mining>

### Google Scholar and Google Books

For a quick bibliographical reference to scholarly books and articles on practically any mining-related subject, past or present, these two Google websites are well worth exploring. Copyright issues and other impedimenta have disturbed Google's lofty dream of making the aggregate literature of the world available online through text-readable scans, but evidently the dream persists and the scanning continues at various libraries at home and abroad. Currently, only pre-1925 publications scanned by Google teams are readable in "full view."

<http://scholar.google.com/> and  
<http://books.google.com/>

Researching mining history from the convenience of your own home is a 21st century activity no one could even imagine when I began graduate school in 1960. But going online today is still no substitute for the inevitable visit to libraries, archival repositories, historical societies, museums, courthouses, company offices, and other institutional locations. Even the vast Google dream does not encompass a global digitalization of unpublished resources. I just hope to live to see the day when I can "google" the most obscure mining site in the world and turn up a list of repositories where the essential documentary evidence can be found.

*Ron Limbaugh, MHA President*

## **Newsletter Contributions Welcome!**

Do you have a piece of research that is interesting, but much too short for the *Mining History Journal*? News about an upcoming conference or event related to mining history? A tip about a "hidden gem" of an archive? Consider sending it to the *Mining History News*! We are always looking for information of interest to our fellow members.

Contact Newsletter Editor Eric Nystrom at [eric.nystrom@rit.edu](mailto:eric.nystrom@rit.edu) for further details.

## James Harry Besleme (1937-2009)



James Harry "Jim" Besleme, 71, died peacefully Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2009, at his home in Columbia. Mr. Besleme was born Feb. 21, 1937, in Brooklyn, N.Y., to Harry and Katherine Besleme. He married Margarita "Rita" Arianoutsos on April 27, 1969. She preceded him in death in June 2003.

He earned a bachelor's degree in mining engineering at the

University of Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy in 1961. He went on to earn a master's degree in engineering administration at the University of Missouri-Rolla in 1968.

Jim pursued a career in hard-rock mining in such diverse locales as his parents' native Greece, where he spent two years after college; and the Steward Mine in Butte, Mont. After his wedding, he headed west with his wife to Farmington, where he worked for Joy Manufacturing and Sullivan Machinery.

In 1988, the family moved to Columbia. He worked for 14 years for Knopke Brothers Contractors Supply. The firm honored him several years in succession for outstanding sales achievement. He continued to work for Knopke after the firm was acquired by Hertz Equipment Rental, and he retired from the firm in 2001.

Jim's lifelong enthusiasm for and rich knowledge of the history of mining and railroads took him around the world and led to many close friendships. In retirement, he continued to travel frequently to historic mines in Butte, Mont.; Silverton, Colo.; Bisbee, Ariz.; and Australia, among many others. As a volunteer researcher with the Bureau of Land Management of the U.S. Department of the Interior, he collected oral histories of the mining community of Mackay, Idaho. He was an officer of the Mining History Association. As president of the train enthusiasts' group Mid-Missouri Railfans, he organized numerous activities to promote a wider appreciation of trains and railroading. As an historical researcher he contributed to the logging journal "Tall Timber Short Lines."

Survivors include daughters Katherine Besleme and husband Orestes Anastasia of Bangkok, Thailand and Irene Lobstein and husband Baron Lobstein of Moscow, Russia; son Harry Besleme of Columbia; granddaughter, Rita Anastasia of Bangkok, Thailand; and a sister, Tanya Papadopoulos of Mary Esther, Fla.

In lieu of flowers, tax-deductible donations may be made to the White Knob Historical Preservation Committee, Route 1, Box 41A, Darlington, Idaho 83255.

## Letter to the Editor

In the article "Abandoned Mines: Balancing Risks and Rewards" in the September issue of *Mining History News*, Ron Limbaugh points out the potential dangers of these abandoned mine sites. While it is certainly true that such sites do possess a number of inherent dangers, the level of risk seems to be greatly exaggerated by the media in general. Mr. Limbaugh's own examples of mine fatalities illustrate this point well. Take the case of the three men dying of carbon monoxide poisoning in a 20-foot deep shaft in California because they started up a gas-powered pump without proper ventilation. This could easily have happened in any enclosed place, be it a mine shaft or the basement of a house. But because of the general fear in the eye of the public of abandoned mines, the mine itself becomes the demon, which must be sealed off for the protection of the populace. Had this same tragedy occurred in the basement of a house being renovated, I doubt very much that there would be an outcry over the dangers of old houses. And the example of a man drowning in a local swimming hole in Australia that was formed from the pit of an old coal mine - couldn't that man have just as easily drowned in any lake or river in the area? In fact, chances are he may well have done that, had this coal mine pit been closed off and inaccessible. He simply would have gone elsewhere to cool off.

Mr. Limbaugh quotes a statistic of 124 people dying at inactive and abandoned mines for the four years up to 2008. That is 31 people per year. True, that is indeed tragic, but a pretty small number when you think about it. How many people die per year in mountain climbing accidents? I don't have the numbers, but I would be willing to bet it is far greater than 31. How about white water rafting? Every summer, a number of rafters drown in the rivers of Colorado, probably close to a dozen in that state alone. Mountains and rivers are both inherently dangerous things, but people enjoy the activities associated with them, and consider the benefits of the pleasure they get from these activities to outweigh the risks. I consider the exploration of abandoned mine sites to be similar to these other types of activities. There are indeed risks, but if someone is willing to take these risks for their own enjoyment, then that is their choice. We don't see a push to close inherently dangerous sites like mountains and rivers. Why not leave abandoned mining sites alone, so that those who appreciate their history can enjoy them as they are?

I realize that some abandoned mine sites do need to be dealt with in one way or another, and I'm not opposed to that. A deep, open shaft in a popular hiking area is simply too dangerous to leave as it is, with the potential for children and pets to inadvertently wander through. But as a member of the Mining History Association, I believe that

## 21st Annual Induction Banquet, National Mining Museum and Hall of Fame, Leadville, CO

Dawn Bunyak

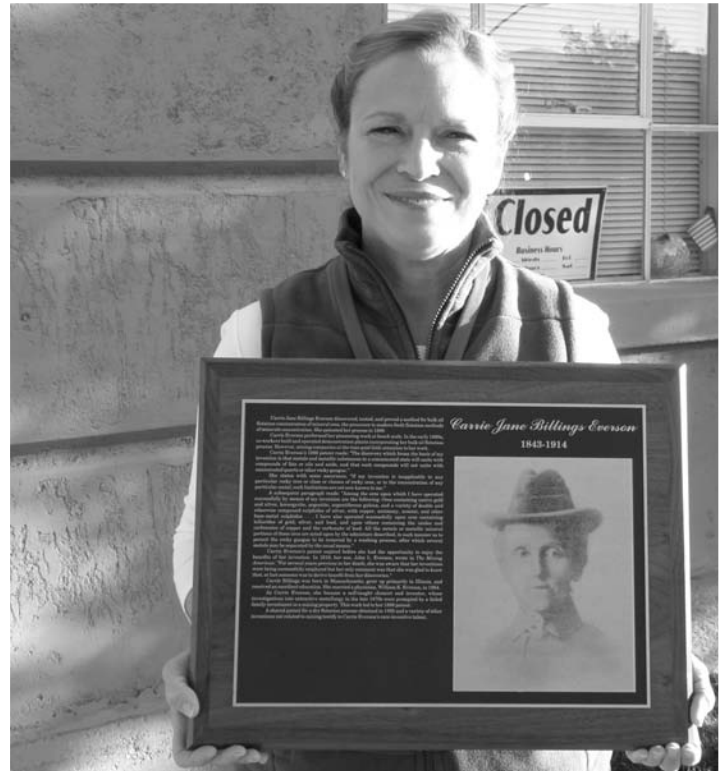
On Saturday, September 13, 2008, at the 21st National Mining Museum Banquet in Leadville, Colorado, four outstanding individuals were inducted into the Hall of Fame. The National Mining Hall of Fame is a memorial for men and women who achieved lasting greatness in the mining and natural resource environments.

Inductees are selected from a list of candidates by the National Mining Museum Board of Governors and then inducted at the annual banquet. Engraved photographs and biographies are then placed in the National Mining Hall of Fame in the museum. Usually a candidate is deceased and has made a significant contribution to the American mining scene. Nevertheless, the Board of Governors may elect a living, retired candidate for the nomination. This year's inductees included three deceased individuals (Carrie Jane Billings Everson, Colonel William Greene, and Arthur L. Hawkesworth) and one living individual (Lew Eklund of Elko, Nevada).

Master of Ceremonies Jeffrey L. Zelms, retired Vice Chairman and President of the Doe Run Company, opened the banquet with a welcome address. Opening ceremonies included a speech by David and Terry Fagin; entertainment by Judge Neil Reynolds, Leadville Municipal Court Judge; and official greeting by Leadville Mayor Bud Elliot. Mr. Fagin, past president, Homestake Mining Company, presented the 2008 Prazen Award, which honors organizations for their development of exhibits and incorporation of those exhibits in large public gatherings of teachers, students, and ordinary citizens to educate the public about the mining industry. This year's recipient was the Colorado Mining Exhibit Foundation and its coordinator, Guy Johnson. Following the presentation of the Prazen Award, Dr. Thomas Falkie, retired chairman of Berwind Natural Resources Corporation, gave an introduction to the four Hall of Fame Inductees.

The only living inductee, **Lew Eklund**, founded Eklund Drilling, now headquartered in Elko, Nevada, and invented machinery that plays a major role in today's mining industry. His Cyclo Blower and various sampling devices he designed helped to revolutionize gold-deposit exploration by allowing mining companies to effectively sample microscopic gold.

**Carrie J. Everson** (1843-1914) discovered and proved a method of bulk oil flotation concentration of mineral ores, the precursor to modern froth flotation methods of minerals concentration. She patented her process in 1886. Everson is only the 6th woman to be inducted in the 21 years of the Hall of Fame. "**Colonel**" **William C. Greene** (1851-1911) was directly responsible for the development of the great copper mining properties of Cananea, Mexico. **Arthur L. Hawkesworth** (1860-1925), a Master Mechanic for Anaconda Copper, invented the detachable drill bit. His invention generated tremendous savings for the mining industry—in time, in dollars, and in safer operating conditions underground.



Dawn Bunyak, current MHA Secretary, poses with the Mining Hall of Fame plaque for Carrie Jane Everson.

After the induction ceremony, Mining History Association member and Executive Chairman of Royal Gold, Inc., Mr. Stanley Dempsey gave the keynote address, "Ten Mile Consolidated Mining District," an informative and entertaining history of the Colorado mining district.

Nominations for the Hall of Fame can be sent to Lane White, Nominations Chairman, National Mining Hall of Fame, 2816 S. Fenton Street, Denver, CO 80227. Nominations should include a biographical sketch of approximately 600 words, a photograph or a high-quality photocopy for reproduction, and any supporting documentation. Inquiries can be made to Lane White at [lane.white@comcast.net](mailto:lane.white@comcast.net) or to the National Mining Hall of Fame at (719) 486-1229.

"Letter to the Editor," continued from page 3

we should be doing all we can to preserve what little is left of this important part of our history. It just isn't the same to see a mine site with a surface building or two preserved, but the mine itself completely sealed off and all the waste dumps removed. These things are an important part of the overall integrity of the site. So, let's not get onto the bandwagon of fearing abandoned mine sites and calling for their reclamation, simply because there are potential hazards present.

Mark Greaves, Wheat Ridge, Colorado

## MHA Candidate Biographies

### David A. Wolff

#### *Candidate: Vice President/President Elect*

David A. Wolff has been an active member of the Mining History Association since its inception, serving on the council and the nominating committee, and giving presentations at three of the conferences. He is employed as the Black Hills, South Dakota, and Western History specialist at Black Hills State University in Spearfish, SD. Wolff did his undergraduate and Master's work at the University of Wyoming, and received his Ph.D. from Arizona State University. His research interests center around natural resource exploitation, especially coal and gold, with articles published in the *Mining History Journal*, *South Dakota History*, and the *American Indian Quarterly*. He has also published a book titled *Industrializing the Rockies: Growth, Competition, and Turmoil in the Coalfields of Colorado and Wyoming, 1868-1914* (2003). In April 2009, his book on Seth Bullock, Deadwood lawman and mining entrepreneur, will be released. Besides the MHA, Wolff is also involved in a number of other historical organizations, such as the Western History Association, and he currently serves as chairman of the oversight boards for the Adams Museum and House, and for the Homestake-Adams Research and Cultural Center, both in Deadwood. He is also on the Boards for the South Dakota State Historical Society and the South Dakota State Railroad Museum.

### John Hillman

#### *Candidate: MHA Council*

Professor Emeritus, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario. Educated at Balliol College, Oxford, MA 1963, and the State University of New York at Buffalo, Ph.D 1985. Primary research interest in the history of the international tin industry, ca 1850-1950. A comprehensive monograph on the Tin Cartel, which stabilized the market during the 1930s, will be published by Routledge in 2009.

### Paul Malkoski

#### *Candidate: MHA Council*

Paul Malkoski earned his BA and MA in American history recently from the University of Colorado at Denver after spending 30 years in telecommunications and computers. In graduate school studying with Tom Noel and Jay Fell, he encountered Colorado history and its deep mining connection, especially as it relates to the lives of the miners and labor relations. He also discovered that he was able to combine an interest in mining and cowboys and his musical talents and now uses folk music to convey the issues of working men and women in the classes he teaches at the Community College of Denver. At the request of Dr. Noel, Malkoski presented a program of mining songs at the MHA meeting in 2007 in Leadville that was well received.

### John Steward

#### *Candidate: MHA Council*

No biography received.

### Bill Wahl

#### *Candidate: Nominating Committee*

Graduated as Mining Engineer from Colorado School of Mines, short terms as underground miner in Central City CO, San Manuel AZ and at Climax. Checkered career for City of Richmond CA, Spreckels Sugar and found way back to mining with Mountain States Engineers in Tucson. After four years gainful employment, opened consulting office with construction work in Arizona and engineering in Mexico. By late 1970's purchased a limestone quarry supplying the sugar factories. Converted plant to making feed for glass plants and animal feed. In 1997 bought IMV, a speciality clay producer from U.S. Borax. Proudest accomplishments, besides four children, were co-Chair and Chairman of the two Nevada Boomtowns held in Amargosa NV in 2006 and 2007.

# 2009 Mining History Association Ballot

*Nominating Committee: Noel Kirshenbaum (chair), Jeremy Mouat, Duane Smith*

## Vice President/President Elect (one-year term beginning June 2009)

Vote for one:

David Wolff

\_\_\_\_\_ (write in)

## Council (three positions, three-year terms beginning June 2009)

Vote for three:

John Hillman

Paul Malkoski

John Steward

\_\_\_\_\_ (write in)

## Nominating Committee (one position, three-year term beginning June 2009)

Vote for one:

Bill Wahl

\_\_\_\_\_ (write in)

**Biographies are on the previous page.**

**Mail ballot by February 28, 2009 to:**

**Mining History Association**

**P.O. Box 552**

**Sedalia, CO 80135**

## Mining History on the Internet

The Mining History Association maintains both a website and an email / discussion group forum to encourage the development of mining history on the Internet. At the MHA website, you can find past newsletters, information about joining or renewing membership, and more! Go to:

**<http://www.mininghistoryassociation.org>**

You can also participate in the continuing discussion of all aspects of mining history by joining the MHA's email list! For instructions on how to subscribe and participate, email:

**[MiningHistoryAssociation-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:MiningHistoryAssociation-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)**

# Mining History Association

## 2009 RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAM

The Research Grant Program is open to all who are currently engaged in or who plan to conduct mining history research, or who have completed a relevant project and need funding to attend a Mining History Annual Meeting in order to make a presentation on the subject of their research. Eligible persons include academic scholars, public sector professionals in history-related disciplines, independent scholars, graduate students, writers, and educators. 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 Grant 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 Grant Committee on the basis of available funding, the grant criteria as indicated below, and on individual budget priorities.

All completed written and digital materials must be submitted to the Chair of the Mining History Association's Grant Committee and postmarked no later than May 1, 2009. Announcement of the winners will be made as quickly as possible, so that funds may be used in preparation for the 2010 Annual meeting.

Criteria for selection include the following:

1. Clarity of the stated objectives and procedures;
2. Quality of the work anticipated and the likelihood that the proposed project will be successfully completed within one year from the time the grant money becomes available;
3. Relevance of the research topic to mining history;
4. Plans for disseminating the results of the research.

To be eligible for funding, applicants must submit the following before the indicated deadline:

1. One complete letter of application with required attachments, all to be word-processed or typewritten on white background, plus a second copy of all materials on a CD in MS-WORD format. The letter must include: Name, Address, Phone and/or E-mail, Affiliation (if any), Title of the Proposed Project, and Amount Requested. The attachments must include:
  2. A short proposal (maximum of two pages), describing the nature and purpose of the research, the relevance to mining history; the purpose and necessity of the travel, and the sources expected to be consulted (if to a research institution);
  3. A one-page budget with a time frame that itemizes the amounts requested (maximum \$750); indicates how, when and where the money will be used; and prioritizes the amounts by order of importance to the project.
  4. A brief vita with personal information relevant to the proposal;
  5. (For scholars without mining history credentials or prior publication) Submit, at a minimum, one letter of recommendation from an established scholar, teacher, or mining business professional who can vouch for the applicant's interests and abilities.
  6. Agree to prepare, within one year following a grant award, either a presentation for consideration by the program committee at the MHA Annual meeting, or an article to be reviewed in consideration for publication by the *Mining History Journal*. Some awardees may choose to do both.

**Send these materials in paper format and a CD in MS-WORD format, to Robert Otto, Chair, Mining History Association's Grant Committee, at 5210 Airport Road, Spearfish, SD 57783, E-mail: [rotto@spe.midco.net](mailto:rotto@spe.midco.net). SUBMISSION DEADLINE: May 1, 2009**

*Mining History Association*  
P.O. Box 552  
Sedalia, CO 80135

## **First Class Mail**

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### **Upcoming Events**

#### **20th Annual Mining History Conference**

June 4-6, 2009

Creede, CO

<http://www.mininghistoryassociation.org>

#### **2009 Vernacular Architecture Forum: "Mining Metropolis: An Island in a Stockmen's Paradise"**

June 10-13, 2009

Butte, MT

<http://www.vafweb.org>

#### **8th International Mining History Conference**

June 12-15, 2009

Redruth, Cornwall, Great Britain

<http://www.huss.ex.ac.uk/history/imhc/index.php>

#### **10th Cultural Heritage Symposium on Mining, Metallurgy, and Geosciences**

September 29-October 2, 2009

Freiberg, Saxony, Germany

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 Eric Nystrom at the MHA address or by email: [eric.nystrom@rit.edu](mailto:eric.nystrom@rit.edu).

Deadlines:            March issue: February 15  
                              June issue: May 15  
                              September issue: August 15  
                              December issue: November 15

Change of Address: Please send all address changes to Diane Dudley, Membership Chair, at:

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[www.mininghistoryassociation.org](http://www.mininghistoryassociation.org)