

Mining History News

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mining History Association

A Publication of the Mining History Association

Spring 2022

Presidential Pickings

Photos and Mining History

After reading the last newsletter, MHA member Hans Muessig wrote me with a suggestion for this column. "Historic photographs are a critical and I think underutilized resource in studying the past," he argued, and I couldn't agree more!

Historians are generally trained to pay closest attention to words and texts as sources, a preference that dates to the earliest years of the field's professionalization in the 19th century. But what, then, about photographs as sources of historical information? Put simply, they can show us, rather than tell us, what a place looked like at some moment in the past. We can see buildings that are no longer standing, view technologies soon to be replaced, and note the location of streets, sidewalks, ore piles, and more. All valuable, or potentially so! But more can be understood from photographs if you look a little deeper.

This topic is near and dear to me. My doctoral dissertation and first book were both concerned with the visual culture of mining, and when the book project turned to examine maps and models in greater detail, I summarized the part of my research focused on underground photography in an article for the Mining History Journal in 2010. Of course, most photography associated with mining was not carried on underground, so far more might be said about photography and mining history.

I mentioned a moment ago that most historians are not trained specifically to work with photographs as sources, which meant that I was lucky indeed to be mentored in the study of historic photographs by Peter Liebhold, Curator (now Emeritus) of the Division of Work and Industry at the National Museum of American History, part of the Smithsonian Institution. Peter was responsible for the mining collections in the museum, among many others, but he was formally trained in photography, and he generously shared this knowledge with an eager graduate student.

Just as it is helpful to historians to know the context in which a document they are analyzing was created, it is very useful to know a little bit about the history of photography in order to better use and understand photographs as sources. Whole books exist on the history of photography, of

¹ Eric Nystrom, "Underground Photography and American Mining Before 1920," *Mining History Journal* 17 (2010): 103-126, https://mininghistoryassociation.org/Journal/MHJ-v17-2010-Nystrom.pdf

course, so I'll just mention two of the many things that Peter taught me, long ago, to look for when encountering a historic photograph – the conventions, and the photographic technology.

Photography is filled with conventions, and those conventions also change over time. Understanding the conventions that the photographer was trying to invoke can help a historian recover more information about what is being portrayed, and better understand what the photograph might and might not be attempting to say.

Think of the photographic conventions of our present day – so commonplace that we might not give them much thought at all. There's the "selfie" pose, for instance, which has come to imply a kind of fun and casual spontaneity. The selfie didn't exist before the last decade or two, dependent to some degree on changes in camera technology to make them light enough to hold in an outstretched arm and have lenses that can capture objects very close. (Helpfully, these two technological innovations are packaged together in a tiny computer that fits in our pocket.) The selfie can be used as a convention even when there are other photographic conventions that might also be available. Imagine a small group at one of our annual meetings wants a photograph – do we gather up and hand a camera to a friend who tells us to say "cheese"? Or do we huddle, put on an exaggerated facial expression, and take a group selfie? Our choice of conventions, in that moment, might have something to do with where we think the photo will go (on the MHA website? Facebook?), and how close members of the group are as friends in addition to mining history colleagues. Maybe the efforts of the reception bartender have an effect too!

In the 19th century, photographic conventions were even stronger influences on how photographs were made. Many photographers of the time had some training as artists, and so they would commonly incorporate artistic conventions when staging their photographs. Photographs of workers often included their tools or uniforms, for instance. For outside photographs, such as of mining sites, photographers would try to incorporate a tiny human element. We think of this as being "for scale," which it was to an extent, but it was also an invocation of a small human pondering a large, sublime creation – one tradition among many that photographers derived from romantic landscape artists. If you look carefully, those tiny humans are usually looking at the "real" subject of the photo, such as the headframe, vast and sublime, rather than at the photographer directly. Photographers of this time would also sometimes deliberately leave some trace of themselves in the work, like an artist's signature on a painting. These can include their portable developing kit or wagon, a shadow of the tripod and hooded photographer, or (my favorite) a faint reflection of camera and cameraman in a window or mirror.

Liebhold also emphasized that a little knowledge of the technology of photography could be extremely helpful in reading a photograph. Any photograph had to journey through three stages – exposure, where light (and, of course, an image) fell on some kind of sensitive base; development, where that exposed base was "fixed" to prevent the image from disappearing; and printing, where a permanent copy was made. Recognizing the underlying technology used, whether daguerrotype, wet collodion plate, dry plate, or roll film, could help date the photo or print and provide clues about how to interpret some of the features on the image. Working with negatives and prints in the museum's collection, Peter showed me how wet plate negatives could be distinguished from dry plates, such as by the uneven borders of the image (where the emulsion was blocked from the edge where the photographer had to handle it), and the non-

uniform coating on the negative itself. We saw how photographers could alter negatives after exposure but before printing, to write on them (backwards!), or to draw or erase elements with india ink, which printed white in the final image.

He helped me realize that it is wise to assume that there was no such thing as a casual photograph before about 1890, and for several decades more, professional photographs were carefully composed by people familiar with artistic conventions and who were using cameras that required careful setup and composition of the image to be captured. The ultimate image depended on their equipment, their technique, and a range of factors that might or might not be within their control, but they might take measures to get a good shot that would seem over-the-top to us today. The image of a historic mining town seems to show a pleasant, early spring day when there are no leaves on trees to block detail, it's light enough to show the buildings evenly without terrible shadows, yet cold enough that chimney smoke and heat creates a field of industrious little plumes? *Not a coincidence*. The photographer probably waited very carefully to capture that particular shot in that particular way.

By the way, if you can see the negatives, you might be in for a real treat. Glass plate technology captured much finer detail than film did. Put in modern terms, these glass negatives represent images of a hundred megapixels or more, and the glass plates are usually huge compared to the smaller film negatives with which we are familiar from later times. With a modern scanner using a backlight (to push light through the negative), sometimes remarkable detail can be extracted from the negative that was not visible in the print.

But the best piece of advice I received from Peter was to think of photographs as representing not just the facts of a past time and place, but also some point of view. Literally! A photograph is taken from a point of view, which is an optical point in space but which also exists as a function of the intents of the photograph's creator, including photographic or artistic conventions they choose to use, combined with the constraints placed on them by technology and their subject. In turn, when you use a photograph in the course of working on mining history, I encourage you to do more than just using it as an illustration. Help your audience understand the evidence you derive from this unique and valuable source!

Eric Nystrom, MHA President

MHA Elections, Officers, and Nominations Committee Reports

Thank you to those that participated in the Associations election process. Chris Huggard has been elected by the membership to take the high office of President during our Birmingham Conference. Dana Bennett has been elected to the position of Vice President / President-elect also taking office during our Birmingham Conference.

The three Council positions and the position on the Nominating Committee will be filled during the Annual Conference. If you have any interest in fulfilling either of those positions, please make your interest known to Stephen Hart (stephen_hart45@msn.com). Likewise, if you have any questions about your duties if asked to fill either position, please follow up with Stephen.

Welcome to the Annual MHA Conference in Birmingham.

Birmingham, Alabama will be our host city for the 32nd Annual Conference of the Mining History Association on June 23-26, 2022. The Hilton Birmingham at UAB (University of Alabama – Birmingham) will be our conference hotel and the venue for the technical sessions as well as several social functions. It is located in downtown Birmingham and, as the name implies, is adjacent to the University.

Abundant iron ore, coal, and limestone resources in the Birmingham area made it the center of iron and steel production in the Southeastern U.S. into the late 1900s. Steel is still produced in the area using modern electric arc furnaces fed with scrap metal. It was dubbed the "Magic City," The industrial heritage of these industries is on display at many locations throughout the Birmingham Metro Area and sites we will visit on the conference tours and field trips.

Birmingham and its surrounding territory offer many scenic, historical, and recreational opportunities for you and your family. We encourage you to explore and enjoy your stay in the region. The Alabama Tourism Department website is https://alabama.travel/. If you have registered for our conference, you likely already received a Vacation and Events Guide from them. The Alabama Tourism Department provided the MHA with a grant to help defray the costs of hosting this year's conference. If you need to contact our Conference organizer, please contact Jim Day at dayis@montevallo.edu



REGISTRATION

All Registrations must be received by May 15th. *Everyone attending the Birmingham Conference must pay the appropriate general registration fee*. Additional activities and events are to be selected and paid for a la carte. (Please make all checks payable to the Mining History Association.)

Some events and activities can accommodate only a limited number of participants. Rosters for those events will be filled on a strictly first-come, first-served basis as determined by the postmarks on the Registration Forms as they are received. Thus, it is important that ALL REGISTRANTS mail in that completed form, even if registration forms are paid via Square! Please provide all contact information requested on the form so we can reach you promptly, if necessary.

Payment via Square: Registration fees may be remitted via Square by using the on-line Registration form at the MHA website.

Please note, however, that a 3% service fee will be added, and as mentioned above, the completed registration form still MUST be printed out and mailed to:

MHA, 2022 c/o James S. Day 3005 North Grande View Cove Maylene, AL 35114

ACCOMMODATIONS

The conference hotel is the <u>Hilton Birmingham at UAB</u> (University of Alabama – Birmingham). There is a special group rate for the MHA of \$139 per night. Use this code "MHA" when making reservations. Make your reservations early by calling 205-933-9000, ext. 1. There is an additional \$14 per day hotel parking fee for those with vehicles. The Hilton has a complimentary shuttle from Shuttlesworth International Airport (BHM).

There is a wide variety of accommodations in the Birmingham area from quaint bed and breakfasts to many national chains at various price points. For campers, there are a number of state park and private campgrounds outside the Birmingham metro area. For example, at Oak Mountain State Park (south) and at Tannehill Ironworks Historic State Park (west). You campers will know how to surf the web for more options.

TRANSPORTATION

By Air

Birmingham Shuttlesworth International Airport (BHM) is served by American, Delta, Southwest, and United Airlines. Flights arrive from Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Las Vegas, Miami, Philadelphia, and Tampa. There are a variety if transportation options from the airport to local hotels (taxi, bus, etc.). Check the <u>airport website</u> for more information. The Hilton offers a complimentary airport shuttle.

By Car

Easy access to Birmingham is provided via several Interstate highways: From N&S on I-65, SW on I-20, NE on I-59, NW on I-22.

By Rail

AMTRAK's "The Crescent" between New York and New Orleans (30 hours, 33 stops, via Phila, Wash, Charlotte, Atlanta and on to New Orleans – Make a "Grand Tour" of it with a USA Rail Pass, 10 segments, 30 days).

FORMAL SESSIONS, PAPERS AND VENDORS

The venue for all formal sessions and vendors' tables is the Hilton Birmingham at UAB and associated facilities located at 808 20th St S, Birmingham, AL 35205.

Vendor tables will be available at \$35 per table in a location adjacent to the session rooms on Friday and Saturday, June 24 and 25. Persons interested in being a vendor should contact Jim Day at dayis@montevallo.edu

Updates and changes will be posted to the conference web page at https://www.mininghistoryassociation.org/Birmingham2022.htm

There will <u>not</u> be a program booklet published for the 2022 conference. Instead, participants will receive a simple printed "pocket program" with most information posted to the web page, including abstracts and speaker bios.

PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Thursday, June 23

10:00-6:00 - Registration - Hilton UAB

10:00-12:00 – MHA and Editorial Board Meetings

1:00-4:00 – Sloss Furnaces Tours' 2:30 **Guided Tour** Available All Other Tours Self Guided

4:00-5:30 – Iron Pour Demonstration

NOTE: Thursday is "Sloss Day" for the MHA. Birmingham is hosting the World Games in July 2022, and Sloss will close after our event—therefore, this is your only chance to see this well-preserved smelting complex and museum!

6:30-9:30 – Opening Reception – Hilton UAB Pool Veranda

Friday, June 24

7:00-11:30 - Registration - Hilton UAB

8:00-8:30 – Welcome and Opening Comments

8:45-9:45 – Session 1 – Iron in Alabama "The Iron Trail Leading to Birmingham," Fred Barnard

"Iron Ore Mining on Red Mountain, 1880s-1960s," Jack Bergstresser

"Bessemer's Woodward Iron Company as an Example of Integrated Iron Manufacturing in the Birmingham District," Paul Spyhalski

9:45-10:00 - Break

10:00-10:45 – Session 2 – Heritage Matters "Colorado Mining History in Images: Accessibility and Preservation for the Long Haul," Lisa Dunn

"Kentucky's Coal Heritage Trail," Steve Gardner 10:45-11:30 – Session 3 – Irish Presence
"Language, Community, and Opportunity: Irish Copper Miners in the Michigan Copper Country, 1845-1900," William Mulligan
"Naming the Unnamed in Leadville,
Colorado: The Effort to Memorialize 19th
Century Irish Exiles in Unmarked Pauper
Graves at 10,200 Feet," James Walsh

11:30-1:00 - Lunch

"Diamonds in the Rough: A History of Alabama's Cahaba Coal Field," James Day

1:00-1:15 - Break

1:15-2:00 – Session 4 – The Federal Presence "Locating Mining Knowledge: Expertise, Government, and Extraction in 1880s America," Eric Nystrom

"The Mining Industry, U.S. Congress, and Native American Land Dispossession, 1880-1920," Paul White

2:00-2:15 - Break

2:15-3:00 – Session 5 – Beyond the United States

"Business Law and Mining: Megantic County's Early Copper Mining Companies," William Culver

"Glimpses of Ancient Mining and Metallurgical Practices in Medieval India: Case Histories," Santharam Adibhatla, K. Arjunudu

3:00-3:15 - Break

3:15-4:15 – Session 6 – Techniques and Technologies

"From Alabama Gold to Utah Silver: The Journeys of Two Practical Mining Engineers, 1889 to 1979," Laurence James and James Fell "Exactly What is Mining and the Coming Age of the Hydraulic Processes," Ed Raines

4:15-6:30 – Relocate to Vulcan Park

6:30-9:00 – Awards Banquet – Vulcan Park
"Vulcan: A Symbol of Birmingham's
Industrial Epoch," Jameson Pressley
Enjoy Vulcan Park's dramatic setting from
atop Red Mountain with a panoramic
overlook of downtown. We'll have access to
the entire facility, including the museum, the
Vulcan statue, and the patio overlook. The
site is built right over an old iron mine
tunnel. Don't miss the spectacular views!

Saturday, June 25

8:45-9:45 – Session 7 – The Cavalcade of Mining, Part 1

"Alabama Gold," Peggy Walls

"The History of the Bertha Mines and Pulaski Zinc Smelter in Virginia," Michael Kaas

"First Iron Smelting Operation on the Pacific Coast, Lake Oswego, Oregon," Clark Niewendorp

9:45-10:00 - Break

10:00-11:15 – Session 8 – The Cavalcade of Mining, Part 2

"A False Glimmer of Hope: The Rise and Fall of Arkansas' Cinnabar Mining District, 1931-1946," Terry Reynolds

"Failure to Protect: Asbestos Contamination from the Vermiculite Mine in Libby, Montana, 1963-1990," Jennifer Dunn

"State Government Promotion of Clay Mining in West Tennessee," Erik Nordberg

"Frozen to Death in Death Valley," Rudy Davidson

11:15-11:30 - Break

11:30-1:00 – Presidential Luncheon "Huggard's Mining History Odyssey," Chris Huggard

2:00-6:00 – Saturday Tours Birmingham's iron mining legacy is preserved at multiple locations in and around the city. Separate tours will take participants to three different parts of the Birmingham area:

Saturday Tour #1: Red Mountain Park (36 maximum)

Explore this mountaintop park with walking trails among former iron ore mines.

Saturday Tour #2: Ruffner Mountain (36 maximum)

This former iron mining area is now a nature preserve with hiking trails.

Saturday Tour #3: Company Towns (36 maximum)

Visit mining communities and owners' mansions lining the brow of Red Mountain.

6:00 – Dinner on Your Own Sample some of Birmingham's renowned cuisine at any of the city's numerous restaurants and venues in the Five Points South, Uptown, and other entertainment districts.

Sunday, June 26

9:00-5:00 – Sunday Tour #1: Sylacauga Marble (36 maximum)

The world-class marble quarries in Sylacauga are located about an hour's drive east of Birmingham. A 32-mile-long formation has been known for producing the "whitest marble" (and many other varieties) for over a century. It has been used in countless construction, interior decor, and sculptural projects. The tour will include the Alabama Marble, Mineral, and Mining Company quarry operation and visit with European-trained Sculptor-in-Residence, Craigger Browne. (Box lunch included)

10:00-5:00 – Sunday Tour #2: Tannehill, Blocton, Brierfield (36 maximum)
This tour will visit two antebellum ironworks; the Tannehill Ironworks Historical State Park and the Brierfield Ironworks Historical State Park. Both of these furnaces supplied the Selma Arsenal with iron during the Civil War but were destroyed by Union Cavalry in the Spring of 1865. Brierfield reopened after the Civil War. The state-of-the-art Alabama Iron and Steel Museum is also located at Tannehill. The tour will include a stop at the well-preserved Blocton Beehive Coke Ovens. (Box lunch included)

Conference Sponsors

The Alabama Tourism Department provided a grant to the MHA to help defray the overall cost of hosting the Conference. The University of Montevallo History Program also donated \$1,000 to help fund our tours of Red Mountain Park. Thank you to all of our sponsors and donors.



Top Public University in Alabama for History Majors Niche.com

MHA's History has a Home

Knowing your own history is important for any group or organization. It seems doubly important for a history organization, but I know from experience that we don't always practice what we as historians preach. Organizational history gets scattered amongst former officers and board members; no one thinks to save an important document because "someone else will surely have a copy". Sound familiar? Well, to prevent MHA from falling into this scenario, Duane Smith, one of our intrepid founders, created the Mining History Association Collection within the Center of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College in Durango. Duane got the ball rolling, donating materials accumulated during his active years in the Association. Now it's time for the rest of us to get busy. If you are a past officer, council member, committee member, and/or conference organizer, with dusty MHA files that you don't know what to do with, please get in touch with Nik, the Archives Manager at the CSS. Tell him what you have, and he will let you know if the collection needs it and how to get it to him. Nik can be reached at: Nik Kendziorski

Archives Manager
Center of Southwest Studies - Fort Lewis College
1000 Rim Drive
Durango, CO 81301
(970)247-7126 office
(970)247-7422 fax
kendziorski_n@fortlewis.edu
http://swcenter.fortlewis.edu

Attention Potential Vendors

The MHA will be meeting in Birmingham, Alabama at the Hilton Birmingham UAB from June 23-26, 2022. On Friday and Saturday, June 24 and 25, vendor tables will be available at \$35 per table in a location adjacent to the session rooms.

The Conference attracts people from across the U.S. and world interested in mining books, artifacts and other collectible items. Persons interested in being a vendor should contact Jim Day at dayjs@montevallo.edu

MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Birmingham, Alabama June 23-26, 2022

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CONFERENCE REGISTRATION		<u>person</u>	<u>attending</u>	per event		
Members		\$80		\$		
	Members	\$90		\$		
Spouse/Partner		\$40		\$		
	nt (w/School ID)	\$55		\$		
Thu, Jun 23	Sloss Tour (1:00-4:00)	\$20		\$		
	Iron Pour Demonstration (4:00)	\$30		\$		
	Reception (Hilton) (6:30-9:00)	\$40		\$		
Fri, Jun 24	Lunch (Hilton)	\$40		\$		
	Awards Banquet (Vulcan) (6:30)	\$70		\$		
Sat, Jun 25	Presidential Luncheon (Hilton)	\$45		\$		
	Tour: Red Mountain Park (36 max)	\$40		\$		
Sun, Jun 26	Tour: Ruffner Mountain (36 max)	\$40		\$		
	Tour: Company Towns (36 max)	\$40		\$		
	Excursion: Tannehill, Blocton,	¢70		¢		
	Brierfield (36 max)	\$70		\$		
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c/o James S. Day 3005 North Grande View Cove

Maylene, AL 35114



Join us for MHA Nuggets the third Tuesday of the month on Zoom. Each Nugget includes a mining related presentation and social time to spend with your MHA friends. We also have openings for talks. Your topic doesn't have to be academic. Topics can include a visit to a historic mining site or town or an interesting little topic that you happened to find out about. Contact Barbara Clements at mininghistoryassociation@gmail.com if you would like to present an MHA Nugget in the future.

You can also join us on YouTube. You do not need to sign into YouTube, just watch us there. Go to YouTube.com and search for Mining History Association, click on our logo and it will take you to our channel. The LiveStream will start at the top of the hour. 8 p.m. Eastern, 7 p.m. Central, 6 p.m. Central, 5 p.m. Pacific

April Nugget

Topic: English Steam Pumping Engines

Apr 19, 2022

Meeting ID: 856 1076 2066

May Nugget

Topic: Myth and History in the Reality TV

show Gold Rush May 19, 2022

Meeting ID: 899 1685 1812

The Mining History Journal

As an organization that promotes historical mining research, the Minnesota History Association annually publishes *The Mining History Journal*. Each member of the MHA receives a copy as a benefit of their membership.

The Mining History Journal, the annual literary publication of the Mining History Association, seeks manuscripts on mining or its supporting industries of any subject, era or locale. The journal is particularly interested in publishing the personal first-person accounts of persons who have worked within the industry or to preserve mining's history. Manuscripts, which will be peer reviewed, should be sent to the editor, Eric L. Clements at eclements@semo.edu

Calling All MHA Authors

The Mining History News includes a section in the Fall issue highlighting mining books written by our members during the past year or two. These announcements supplement but do not replace the traditional list of publications and book reviews in the Mining History Journal and serve as an additional a way to bring your work to the attention of the entire membership of the MHA.

In order to participate, please send the complete bibliographic information (author, title, publisher, publisher location and year, number of pages, binding, price and ISBN) plus a 100-150 word summary to Paul Spyhalski at prspyhal@yahoo.com. Please include "MHA" at the start of the subject line. The deadline for inclusion in the Fall issue is September 1st.

The mailing label has the year of your last paid membership. If it is earlier than 2022, then please send in your membership renewal or complete it online. Thank you.

* Mining History Association * ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

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

Thank you, for your support and participation in the Mining History Association.

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- 1 Journal
- · Membership Directory, updated every 2 years

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Barbara Clements MHA Membership Chair Mining History Association PO Box 1536 Cape Girardeau MO 63702-1536

Upcoming Events

Mining History Association Conference Birmingham, Alabama June 23-26, 2022

Australasian Mining History Conference Burra, South Australia Sept. 18-25, 2022

Western History AssociationSan Antonio, Texas

October 12-15, 2022

Futures in the History of Deindustrialisation Conference

Bologna, Italy October 13-15, 2022. The *Mining History News* is published quarterly by and for the members of the **Mining History Association**. Submissions for the newsletter are encouraged.

Deadlines: Summer issue: June 15th

Fall issue: September 15th Winter issue: December 1st Spring issue: February 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 the following address:

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