



Mining History News

Newsletter of the Mining History Association

December 2005



Volume 16, Number 4

The Rise and Demise of a Historic Mining Site

Decades ago, it was not uncommon to hear a horror story about some land administrative agency destroying an old mining camp on Federal or State lands because it was an “eye sore”, “fire hazard”, “danger to the public” or, starting in the 1960s, “danger to the environment”. Recent decades however, have seen a change in attitude toward one of historic preservation.

Probably everyone in the Mining History Association has a favorite old mine site, mining district or ghost town, and a good story to go along with it. It’s hard for me to pick just one site, because for many years I made my living examining old mines in the Western U.S. If I have to select just one, I will choose the Pearl Mining District in southwestern Idaho, and not because it is the largest, richest or most historically significant. In fact, using those criteria, Pearl would rank in the lower 50 percent of the ‘boom and bust’ gold camps of the American West. Pearl is significant to me because it is near my hometown, and therefore I was able to periodically monitor its deterioration over a span of 50 years.

The West View or Pearl mining district is located about 8 airline miles southeast of Emmett, Idaho. Part of the district extends eastward, and its mineralization may be an extension of the more famous Quartzburg Mining District (Boise Basin) ten miles farther to the east. The town of Pearl once stood in the center of the district within a few miles of all its important mines. Gold placers may have been dis-

covered in the late 1860’s but no important lode deposits were developed until 1894 and 1895. Major developments occurred during the period between 1900-1907. Sporadic mining continued through the early 1960’s, but production figures are so incomplete and so variable as to be of little value.^{1,2}

Most of you may have never heard of Pearl, but the following abbreviated history will sound very familiar, since it is not much different from that of other boom towns of the early American West. *On 7 December 1867, the proprietor of Dry Creek Station, on the stage route west of Boise, arrived in town with quartz samples from two veins he had discovered on Willow Creek. There was great excitement about a gold strike that close to the Capital city, and a small scale rush was on. Hundreds of buildings were erected on both sides of Willow Creek. There were four saloons, several merchandise stores, a boarding house, barber shop, butcher and slaughter house. In the 1890’s further strikes were made, and this time considerable capital was invested. As the gold fever struck, more and more claims were filed.-----The newspapers of the nineties were filled with headlines like “Willow Creek Bonanza” and mentioned the names of a great group of active mines.-----Miners began to bring out gold, silver, lead and zinc from under ground. The ore was loaded and shipped to Salt Lake City.-----Along with the influx of white men came about 50 Chinese.-----At the nearby Lincoln mine, 200 men were digging out the rich ore.----- In 1906 the mill burned to the ground.-----Two or three shootings saw several men go to boot hill.³*

I spent my high school years at Emmett, and occasionally I and some of my buddies would drive up to the ghost town of Pearl to 'sight in' our deer rifles or some other excuse to go looking for adventure. On one of those occasions, we ignored the signs that said DANGER---KEEP OUT and climbed down a rickety wooden ladder in what I think was the old Lincoln mine shaft; only one dull flashlight among the three of us. There was a rope that hung down the vertical shaft within easy reach of the ladder. Unbeknown to us, the rope was attached to an old school bell, mounted near the top of the wooden headframe that hovered over us and the open shaft. The bell may have been used to signal a fire or mine disaster. On our way down, one of us gave the rope several hard jerks and the bell rang-out loud and clear. Of course, the sound of the bell just encouraged us to jerk on the rope more frequently; after all, Pearl was a ghost town, no one was around except us. A short time later we heard a man frantically yelling down the

shaft for us to "get the hell out of there". His worst fears may have changed to relief as he saw three sheepishly grinning boys climb over the collar of the shaft. After the old watchman learned that no one else was down there, his relief turned to anger. His hands and voice were quivering as he angrily and profanely 'chewed us out'. He shook his head as he looked down at our flashlight with nearly dead batteries, and then told us "how stupid we were to be risking our young lives on those broken ladders and how easily we could have fallen to our deaths". He spoke of rotten timbers, falling rock and other dangers we had never heard of, such as, 'heavy ground' and 'bad air'. Then he unceremoniously kicked us off the property and told us to "never come back". We didn't ask who gave him that authority; to us, the gun hanging on his belt was authority enough. We left as indignant teenagers, without the courtesy or maturity to thank the man for maybe saving our lives. Intuitively however, we must have known he

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2006 MHA Conference

The tours and activities for the June 1 - 4, 2006 conference in Globe, Arizona, are still in the development stage, but already lined up are some interesting and worthwhile tours.

The Thursday June 1st reception will be at the Gila County Museum in Globe. And there is the possibility of a second reception at the Miami Museum on Saturday. On Sunday, June 4th, we have arranged two tours which will take most, if not all, of the day. First is a tour of Roosevelt Dam conducted by Salt River Project. Roosevelt Dam is the largest masonry dam in the U.S. Those who sign up for this tour will go by bus to the dam site, where they will get an in-depth tour of the dam, its hydro-electric system and the interior of the dam. Because of the nature of the dam site, this tour will be restricted to the first thirty (30) people who sign up. The cost of this tour will be determined by the cost of bus transportation, which is still being negotiated. The second tour that day will be an all-day tour of the Phelps Dodge Clifton-Morenci open pit operation. Because of the two and a half-hour drive to the location, this will be a car pool tour. At Clifton-Morenci the participants will get a personal, in-depth tour of the entire facility. Included will be a lunch provided by Phelps Dodge at a facility in Morenci. Again, this tour will be restricted to the first thirty (30) people who sign up, because of the need for safety in some of the areas visited.

Additionally, on Friday afternoon there will be a tour of the Pinal Creek Remediation program, in collaboration with a panel presentation by Jay Spehar. Also on Friday there will be a walking tour of Globe, a tour of Miami's antique stores, and possibly a tour of the Globe Cemetery.

Depending on local conditions, which at this time appear favorable, tours of the Ray mine overlook, and possibly the new operation at Superior, may be available.

Finally, we are also still trying to arrange a tour of

the local facilities, the rod plant and possibly the smelter, but details on those locations have not yet been finalized. Also, for those who are flying into and out of Phoenix, or plan on spending some time in Phoenix, we have arranged for a special tour of the Arizona Mining and Mineral Museum, including a behind-the-scenes tour of their rare minerals room. Those wishing to visit the museum may do so either before or after the conference. The museum, located at 15th Avenue and Washington, is convenient to Sky Harbor Airport.

James McBride

MHA Journal

The 2005 issue of the MHA Journal was mailed to MHA members in October. If you did not receive your copy, please contact our Journal editor, Eric Clements. The 2006 issue is due out October 2006, and Eric would like submissions for that issue by February 1, 2006. Also, back issues of the Journal can be ordered directly from Eric.

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Membership Dues

Bob Sorgenfrei will be mailing renewal letters for 2006 dues after the first of the year. Every year there is some confusion as to what the 'year' denotes that is next to a member's name on the mailing label. Right now the membership label reads 2005 if dues are paid for 2005. Next year, when a member renews for 2006, the mailing label will read 2007, the year that the membership expires and is to be renewed. Bob hopes that it will be clear to everyone that they are paid up for 2006 when they renew.

MHA 2006 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, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability.

Two awards per year will be available, with \$500 being the maximum amount of each Grant. Funds are awarded on a competitive basis. To be eligible for funding, written applications must be submitted to the Chair of the Mining History Association's Grant Committee by June 1, 2006. Announcement of the winners will be made as quickly as possible, so that funds may be used in preparation for the 2007 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;
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 three (3) copies of the following:

1. A completed application form;
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 brief vita with personal information relevant to the proposal;
4. (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.
5. 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*.

Application form available on the MHA website:
www.mininghistoryassociation.org

2006 Grants Award Committee:
Robert A. Trennert, Chair
Dawn Bunyak
Ronald Limbaugh

Mining History Association 2006 Ballot

Vice President: One-Year Term Beginning June 2006, Vote For One:

____ ELEANOR "LEE" SWENT, Palo Alto, California

My father was a mining engineer, my mother was a geologist. I grew up in Lead, South Dakota, at the Homestake Mine. My husband and father-in-law were both mining engineers, and after my marriage I lived in mining towns in Mexico and the U.S. I have a B.A. from Wellesley College, M.A. from Denver University, and LL.D. from South Dakota School of Mines & Technology. From 1985-2004, I was Project Director and Research Interviewer/Editor for the Western Mining Series at the Regional Oral History Office, University of California-Berkeley. The ongoing project documents the contemporary mining industry in more than 100 interviews in 62 volumes completed, with three still in process. I joined the MHA in 1993 and have served one term on the council.

____ (Write-In)

Council: Three 3-Year Terms Beginning June 2006, Vote For 3:

____ BARBARA CLEMENTS, Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Barbara Clements was born and raised in Colorado and has a family interest in mining. Her great-grandfather, William Patrick, came to Colorado in 1875 and had an assaying business in Leadville for many years before moving on to other mining towns. William's brother, Lucien, made and lost a couple fortunes in various mining interests and had the first private bathtub in Goldfield, NV. One of her earliest memories is taking a trip to Leadville to see the mine where her uncle, Roger Patrick, began his career as a mining engineer. Barbara has attended most of the association's conferences and helped organize the 2004 conference in Farmington, MO. She is a compositor for the annual Mining History Journal, and she's also married to a mining historian and has accompanied him on many research trips and rough rides through-out the western North American continent and one quick trip to Cornwall.

____ MARK LANGENFELD, Madison, Wisconsin

Mark Langenfeld has practiced law in the Madison, Wisconsin office of Foley & Lardner for the past 19 years, more than eight of which were largely devoted to representing Exxon Minerals, Rio Algom, Nicolet Minerals Company and BHP Billiton in connection with the ill-fated Crandon Project. Mark (along with his wife Lynn) is actively researching the well-documented but poorly chronicled history of the Upper-Mississippi Valley Lead-Zinc District. Some of that work was the subject of papers presented at MHA conferences in 1993 at Lead, SD and 2001 at Butte, MT. A paper entitled "The Old Stonebreaker: James Gates Percival and the Lead Mines of Wisconsin" is in preparation. Mark has attended all but one of the annual meetings since 1993. He was a member of the program committee for the 1999 conference in Ouray, CO, was a session chair at that meeting, and has served two terms on the Nominating Committee.

____ HOMER MILFORD, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Homer Milford wrote mining history and did bat habitat evaluations of mines for the New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division for 13 years prior to his retirement in 2003. His current primary research interest is investigating and confirming the documentary record of Spanish Mining in the U.S. Before joining NMM&MD he was a Biology Professor for 24 years at UNM and University of Albuquerque. He has served MHA on both the Council and the Nominating Committee.

____ BOB OTTO, Spearfish, South Dakota

Bob Otto was born and raised in Newburgh, New York. He graduated from the Colorado School of Mines in 1974 with a BS in geological engineering. After graduation he went to work at the Homestake Mine in Lead, SD. Here he was a mine geologist, an exploration geologist and a computer specialist, the whole time compiling and investigating the information from Black Hills mining while exploring and finding gold. He is now doing consulting computer and geologic work. He is author of "A 'Golden Candlestick' for President Taft," *Mining Artifact Collector*, 22, (Spring 1994), and co-author of "The Homestake Gold Mine, An Early Proterozoic Iron Formation-hosted Gold Deposit, Lawrence Co., South Dakota," USGS Bulletin 1857-J (1991). He is president of the board of the Black Hills Mining Museum, a member of the Society of Economic Geologists and of the Homestake Veterans Association. He currently lives in Spearfish, SD with his wife Terry.

____ (Write-In)

Nominating Committee: 2 Positions, One 1-Year Term; One 3-Year Term.

The terms of the two candidates with the most votes will be chosen by lot.

____ JEREMY MOUAT, Athabaska, Alberta

Jeremy Mouat teaches at the University of Alberta, Camrose and is chair of the Social Science Department. He has published on mining history on Canada, Australia and New Zealand as well as comparative works on mining technology, especially flotation. His best known work is *Roaring Days, a History of Rossland and the British Columbia Gold Boom*. He organized the MHA conference held at Rossland in 1996, has served on the MHA council, and was president in 2002.

____ CATHLEEN NORMAN, Lakewood, Colorado

Cathleen Norman is a historic preservation consultant specializing in the history and architecture of mining towns. She holds a B. A. in English and M. A. in History from University of Colorado at Denver. Her projects have included cultural resource surveys of Lafayette, Nederland, Victor, Lake City and Ouray, Colorado.

____ DUANE SMITH, Durango, Colorado

One of the founders of the MHA, Duane Smith teaches at Fort Lewis College, Durango, Colorado. He has published over two dozen books and booklets, most of them on a wide range of mining history topics, including a biography of Leadville Bonanza King Horace Tabor, the award winning *Rocky Mountain Mining Camps, and Mining America, the Industry and the Environment*. He has served the MHA in many posts including as president in 1995. He is also an incorrigible Cubs fan.

____ (Write-In)

**Mail ballot by January 15, 2006 to:
Mining History Association
Colorado School of Mines Library
1400 Illinois St.
Golden, CO 80401**

The Rise and Demise of a Historic Mining Site

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was right because none of us ever again suggested going back to Pearl and exploring the old mine workings.

More than a decade later during the summer of 1963, I was working for the US Bureau of Mines as a mining engineer. My job was to evaluate tellurium occurrences in the northwestern states. Tellurium was being sought during the 'space-age' for use in thermoelectric devices used in early satellites to generate electricity. Tellurium is much rarer than gold and, on those rare occasions when its occurrence was accurately recorded, it was usually a gold or silver telluride. Thus, my search led me to most of the old gold and silver camps in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington, which in the 1960s were mostly deserted. Therefore, when I drove into the old Pearl mining district one hot July afternoon, I was delighted to find a few men working at the Gem State Consolidated mine & mill. Even more surprising, they were actually producing some gold concentrate. There were other signs of assessment work and small-scale development, but mostly the old district looked more run down and dilapidated than it had a dozen years earlier. The only other people I met that day were Ed and Ken Dalton, from Oklahoma, who claimed to be descendants of the infamous Dalton brothers. I examined their property, took a few samples and gave them advice, when asked. They were genuinely happy to see a 'government man' who was not there to try and kick them off their claims or otherwise give them a bad time. An old loaded revolver hanging from a nail in a timber, at the portal of their adit, added some credence to the story of their ancestry. They were typical of the hard working, fun-loving, storytelling, miners and prospectors that I would encounter throughout my career. As I drove out of the district, I was very much hoping they might get lucky, 'strike it rich', and Pearl would rise again-- but it didn't happen.⁴

A few years ago I was driving north on State highway 16, approaching Freezeout Hill, when I decided to take the eight miles of dusty, washboard, road that led to the old town-site of Pearl. Nearly an hour later, I was wondering, "where are the old head-frames, mine dumps and dilapidated buildings that identify this old mine camp?" There was nothing, no evidence of the old ghost town or any of the old mine workings. Everything had been hauled away or dozed under. There was not even a marker to show where the old town once stood. Later, I inquired at the Gem County Museum as to the demise of the old Pearl mining camp. I was told that a non-mining firm had acquired the property and removed the old buildings and bulldozed over the old mine workings. The company was afraid of the liability that goes along with owning old mining property. "Liability" I snorted, "who would destroy a historic mine site in the name of liability?" Then, my mind flashed back to a half a century ago, to a time when we foolish boys climbed down a dark mine shaft looking for adventure. Today, the three of us are thankful to a nameless, crusty, old watchman who may have given us a second chance at life, and certainly taught us a lesson in assessing the dangers that accompany adventure. As for the demise of the old mining site, I have to be practical and somewhat philosophical. 'Nothing lasts forever', and Pearl had been in a serious state of neglect and deterioration for many decades. Maybe we can rationalize that old mine sites are not as important as the stories we attach to them-- at least, I had this opportunity to tell one of mine.

Bob Weldin

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- (2) Savage, C.N., 1961, Geology and Mineral Resources of Gem and Payette Counties, Idaho, Idaho BuMines and Geol. County Rept. No. 4, 50 pp.
- (3) Hart, Arthur A, 1973, Memories of Gold Rush , Pearl's Brief Life, Boise Statesman.
- (4) Weldin, Robert D., 1966, Tellurium Occurrences in Idaho, unpublished manuscript.