

NWT Mining Heritage



February
2013

The NWT Mining Heritage Society is a group dedicated to building a mining museum in Yellowknife. It was officially incorporated in July 2002.

The group owns several buildings at the old Giant Mine site and plans to renovate the recreation hall first, followed by buildings at the A-shaft area.

The society has also begun development of outdoor displays at Giant, surrounding the public boat parking lot.



Yellowknife Heritage Week Edition

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2013 from the NWT Mining Heritage Society. This month Yellowknife celebrates **Heritage Week** (February 18 to 24) and there are a number of great events planned throughout the city. Be sure to check out a display of **historic mining artifacts at the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre**.

We held a **New Years members party** on January 26 at the Baker's Centre. It was well attended and everybody enjoyed the chance to meet and greet with old and new members, and were entertained by a historic photo slide show and an interesting mix of background music.

If you drove past Giant the last few weeks you may have noticed a diamond drill rig busy **boring a hole adjacent to our buildings** and outdoor display site. The drilling was commissioned by the Government to determine the stability of old stope pillars that exist close to the



This year's Heritage Week theme is 'immigration', so let's remember the men and women that arrived in the 1930s and carved out this gold town.

surface. The results of this drilling are not yet released but the crews have now packed up the drilling rigs and ceased work. We hope that the geotechnical evaluation will confirm there are no safety hazards associated with old stope workings beneath our site, that the fence will be removed, and we can continue development of our outdoor display.

On the donation front, we received numerous additions to our collection in recent months including a set of **souvenir Yellowknife spoons**. They were a wedding gift presented to Mike Murphy and Sylvia Adair in March

1951, by the shaft sinking crew at Giant Mine. 'Dirty' Mike Murphy was a miner at Giant and a popular hockey and baseball player.

Peter Bengts of the Mining Inspection Services of the GNWT donated a complete **Drager BG174 Mine Rescue Pack** in original case, obsolete rescue equipment used by the mines in the 1960s-1990s to provide a breathable mixture of air to rescuers. And **thanks to Eva Henderson** for a generous cash donation! The Society is currently **planning its summer projects**. Look forward to another Beer Barge party and other fun activities!

Photos from the Collection



Art McInnes, Giant cook, fetches water, 1947 (Allan Mackillop Collection)



Con Mine in 1952 (Don Hurd Collection)



An early Yellowknife general store, 1938 (Leonard Willing Collection)

Heritage Week Contest!



We have been running weekly photo contests in the Yellowknifer newspaper, Friday editions, leading up the Yellowknife Heritage Week. The February 22 edition is the last chance for the public to participate in the photo contest! Help us identify the person(s) in the photo and you can win a gallery wrapped canvas print direct from our very own archives - images not available anywhere else!

Also available for sale through the Society at a **price of \$40 each.**

The Giant Mine Fire Truck

Our more popular outdoor exhibit is the old Giant Mine fire engine, a 1945 *International Harvester KB5* truck. The Giant fire department was formed in 1950 housed in a station located in the yard adjacent to the recreation hall. It was here that a crew of men were always on duty in case a fire alarm was pulled. Because Giant Mine was isolated from Yellowknife, it was important to have their own fire protection equipment and this truck served the mine very well. Giant's fire brigade was active into the 1980s but it was soon disbanded, ending a unique

chapter in the mine's history. Roy Feather, fire chief from 1951-1954, told us a story:

“I had two watchmen under me. They did their rounds every night of the week. Then on pay nights, they had to do their rounds, but also paid a little extra attention to the bunkhouses. If there was any problems, the fire men were paid extra to go on patrol as well. If there was a big fight or something and they let me know, then I send extra fire men in to help. I got involved in quite a few of those that got hurt quite

badly...cuts and that. So I was there to give first aid as needed”



Giant's first fire truck in the 1950s, now part of the mining museum collection. (Roy Feather Collection)

Tramming Ore at Ptarmigan Mine, 1942

This story is extracted from a collection in "The Best Miners in the World: Stories from Canada's Sullivan Mine", published by W.R. Roberts of Kimberley, BC in 2004. It tells of Dory Arfinnson, an underground labourer at Ptarmigan gold mine outside of Yellowknife in 1942.

"When I started mining, I was making sixty cents an hour for an 8-hour day. Hell, if I wanted to go to a movie in Yellowknife, it would cost me three days' wages. It was expensive to go see a movie. One time, I worked twenty-three and a half shifts on one pay day, no overtime. When I got the cheques, holy smokes, I thought I had really made some money. I made \$117.50. Isn't that something? And out of that to top it all off, I had to pay \$1.20 for room and board a day. That came off the \$4.80 I was making a day."

"I thought we were really cutting the mustard and, I'll tell you, we really put in our full eight hours. They expected, when you went underground, that you and your partner would pull at least a hundred cars. That was your set goal. And,

boy, I'll tell you, to pull a hundred cars, you really had to go. Some days you got a few more; some days you got a few less. My partner and I were expected to each push a 1-ton car down to the dump by hand and back to the chute a hundred times."



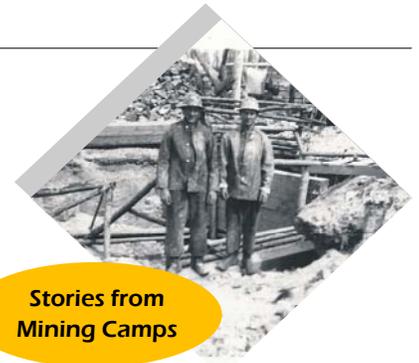
At the miner's dry

"The dump was about a thousand feet. Some were closer, but not many. It used to be dangerous for the guys pushing the front car if the guy in the back was coming a bit faster. You would run right into the back of your partner's legs. Not too many guys got hurt this way but a few did."

"When the Ptarmigan Mine shut down and we were heading to Kimberley for work, the party was



*Ptarmigan gold mine, 15 kilometers east of Yellowknife, 1942
(all photos courtesy of Laurie Grochowich)*



Stories from Mining Camps

going for three days and it was still going when we left. We had all this money left in the recreation fund so we had a quick meeting and decided to throw a party. Hell, a quart of whiskey was four bucks, a day's wages almost, so we had lots of whiskey."



At the blacksmith shop

The Ptarmigan gold mine was staked in 1936 by Yellowknife prospectors Jack Stevens and John Morie. Consolidated Mining & Smelting Company of Canada (aka Cominco) bought the claims in 1938 and began development of the mine. Located 15 kilometers east of Yellowknife, the property was only accessible by taking Carl Jensen's water taxi across Yellowknife Bay and biking the road. It was a favourite place for Yellowknifer's to visit. Tommy Forrest, the cook, made the best dinners.

Ptarmigan Mine produced gold from 1941 to 1942, when Cominco mothballed the site and sent all of its workers to mercury and tungsten mines in British Columbia deemed more important for war metal production. The mine reopened many years later in the 1980s-1990s.



NWT Mining Heritage Society

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FROM THE COLLECTIONS

The winter haul! If you had large freight to move around Yellowknife in the 1940s, you hired a Cat Train skinner to get the job done. These Caterpillar bulldozer propelled sleighs plowed trail across Great Slave Lake to Yellowknife, where supplies were redistributed to various mining camps and projects. New ice road technology made these slow moving convoys obsolete in the 1950s. (Gordon Allen Collection)

We're on the Web!
www.nwtminingheritage.com

This newsletter is published periodically as events are planned and organized.
Edited by Ryan Silke



Upcoming Events:

Yellowknife Heritage Week - February 18 to 24
(www.visityellowknife.ca/events)

Thanks to our ongoing corporate members and sponsors!

