

# NWT Mining Heritage



April  
2014

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.



## What's New with the Museum Society?

Many projects are moving forward as the NWT Mining Heritage Society prepare for another season of site work and development, together with a number of special projects.

One of our major goals is a **redesign of the website**, which is a few years old now and in need of major repair. We have commissioned [Kellet Communications](#) to work on the new site and a sub-committee is meeting with Kellet on design and content. We hope to have the new website launched in June!

The **Long John Jamboree heritage photo booth** was another huge success. The Society loaned items for the display and as costume props, and in return we shared a portion of the profits.

During Heritage Week, the Society launched a **photo exhibit** at the Northern Frontier Visitors Center. The theme is

water transportation and recreation activities, as 'water' was the theme of Heritage Week this year. The exhibit will remain up for the remainder of the year and may become a permanent exhibit feature at the Visitors Center.

We received news from the Yellowknife Airport that the **display of outdoor machinery** at the front of the terminal building must be removed. We are currently looking at options where the machinery can be moved. It will either be integrated into our displays at Giant Mine or dispersed to form new

displays around town.

In related news, one of our summer projects is to **install new interpretive signs** on some of the mining machinery on display at the Giant museum site. Other plans are to repair buildings at the museum site and work on artifact storage requirements.

The **Beer Barge** is scheduled for June 21 and planning will soon be underway to the fifth annual event on Back Bay. Tickets will be on sale at the Spring Trade Show at the Multiplex, May 10-11.



Long John Jamboree Photo Booth - James Mackenzie Photo

## Heritage News Briefs

The new re-routed Ingraham Trail is now open to traffic, diverting highway traffic far from the Giant Mine site area. A gate will be installed to prevent public access to the main mine site beyond the museum area. Visitors and the public are still welcome in the townsite area to access the museum and boat launch. We ask the public to be alert of any

suspicious activity in the area although security will still be patrolling the townsite.

Congratulations to Rick Muyres for receiving the Yellowknife Heritage Award from the City of Yellowknife Heritage Committee, in recognition for his excellent craftsmanship on restoring the Wildcat Café!

A big thank you for some recent donations towards the museum collection. Deryk

Lovlin donated some old sport badges and material from his time up at Discovery Mine. John Kachmar donated curling trophies from Giant Mine.

The Society has recently been commissioned by the GNWT to redo the trail signage for the trail around Fred Henne Park. A sub committee is currently working on trail head and marker signs for the new trail, which had to be changed because of the rerouted highway.

## Keeping in Touch with our Friends!

It is always great to hear from old Yellowknifer's who grew up or worked in the mining industry. Here are some of the people who have been in touch with us!

From Jean-Pierre Miljours: "I worked in Giant Yellowknife Mine for a few months in 1967-1968 first as underground laborer and finally as a raise miner. I started in NWT as prospector (staking claims and cutting lines) in the Hay River and Pine Point area. When I turned 18, I went to work in Uranium City (Eldorado) where I had the chance to do the Stope School. Few months later I was in Yellowknife...."

Bill Featherstone has been working on a website about his experiences growing up at Yellowknife between 1947-1951. His father Ed was electrician at Negus Mine. Check out his blog and photo collection at [www.mckinlayfeatherstone.ca](http://www.mckinlayfeatherstone.ca)!



Ryan recently talked to Bill McCann, another Negus kid, whose father Mickey McCann was chief mechanic and a star of the Negus Hogans sport teams 1945-1952. "Dad was an underground mechanic at Negus. He worked with repairing rock drills and machines on surface too. I remember him waking me up at night. At that age I was small and he would put me inside the hoist drums to tighten lugs with wrenches. I was always petrified that the hoist drum would move but it didn't because of the brakes." His memories include when a Cat Train broke through the ice in front of their house, killing the driver, and witnessing a card game gone wrong while delivering newspapers to the Negus bunkhouse. "I heard a shotgun go off. Apparently there had been a card game in the room and this guy lost a bet, and the guy that had won was in his room sleeping. So this clown come in with a shotgun, and the shot went into the wall above of his head. He got a few pellets in his forehead and that's about it."

## How to Get the Gold Out - at Giant Mine

Our museum collection contains many objects from the Giant Mine refinery process ... brick molds, slagpots, stamps, a bullion furnace. To figure it all out, we got in touch with Dave Dickson, who worked at the Giant mill from 1967 to 1995.

After an incredible journey through the Giant mill and roaster, a 'pregnant' solution was precipitated to dissolve out the gold. Every two weeks the presses were cleaned. Dave says:

"The precipitate was scraped into the pan below. To avoid ANY loss of precipitate the pan was lined with kraft paper and paper 'shields' were formed on all sides.

The Wabi furnaces were started ahead of time to bring them up to temperature usually about 2500 degree F. after approximately 1 hour of heating the first 'roll' or rotation occurred. This was critical



Mike Tettenborn pouring gold at Giant Mine. (Vic Liard photo)

and had to be carefully performed. The reason for this was, if the partially molten charge flopped over because of rotating the furnace too quickly, the result was for lack of a better term it 'boiled over' and splattered out of the furnace and required a huge effort to recover it. Once the first rotation was performed in the furnace it was repeated every 20 minutes or so for another 1 to 1.5 hours till the precipitate was completely molten. Total time up to a pour was an average of 2.5 hours.

Once the gold was fully molten, the slag pots were readied and the burner was shut off. The norm was 3 slag pots - the refiner usually judged if three were enough. First slag pour was done usually no sampling, the second slag pour was done slowly to avoid any overspill of gold. You could see the gold in the bottom of the furnace using dark green glasses as it was heavier than the molten slag. The second slag pour was sampled for gold. If gold was detected it was reprocessed into the bullion furnace.

The burner was restarted to increase heat, the third slag pot was readied and the brick mold placed on the top supported by steel flat bars. The burner was shut off and the slag and gold were poured. Close observation of the stream informed the refiner of the gold and the slag. The gold looked like a 'silver stream' while the slag was reddish (under dark green glasses). We viewed the stream of gold to determine when the gold actually started to pour out of the bullion furnace on the 3rd pour.



Stories from Mining Camps

The refiner had to be careful not to overflow the brick mold. When the mold was full the furnace was tilted back and the gold allowed to set. The slag pot and brick were rolled back using the slag pot cart. The brick mold was picked up using a lifting device and turned upside down on the floor and the brick came out of the mold.

The brick was picked up using a shovel and dumped into a quench tank to cool further. Once cool enough to handle by hand it was removed from the quench tank and cleaned, using an air powered brush and wire brush. Bricks were drilled on opposite corners for a sample and the sample was sent to the assay office for purity testing.

A good brick drilled easy and was about 830 to 860 fine - the rest was silver and metals. The brick was next stamped as per next number in the sequence. Weight was recorded on the shipping container which was banded and a seal attached.

The bricks were then stored in a safe and shipped to the Mint in for further refining up to 999.9 pure."

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### FROM THE COLLECTIONS

The old Zenith Island shaft, part of the Camlaren Mine on Gordon Lake, 80 kilometers northeast of Yellowknife. The small gold mine sunk shafts in 1937-1938 but did not produce any gold until it reopened in the 1960s and 1980s. All that is left today is a stone chimney from the mine manager's abode.

(Frank Jalonen collection)

We're on the Web!  
[www.nwtminingheritage.com](http://www.nwtminingheritage.com)

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



#### Upcoming Events:

Spring Trade Show - May 10-11, 2014  
Beer Barge - Saturday June 21, 2014

## Thanks to our ongoing corporate members and sponsors!

