



NEWSLETTER

A NON-PROFIT HISTORICAL & EDUCATIONAL MUSEUM OF AGRICULTURAL & INDUSTRIAL MACHINERY

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CAMA's Mining Museum By John Pawloski

If one were to take survey of Connecticut residents regarding mining in our State, most would probably say it doesn't exist and probably never did exist. Yet it was in Connecticut where mining in the United States was born. Connecticut had the first copper, bismuth, cobalt, nickel, tungsten, marble, sandstone, and granite mines in America. Our iron mines and furnaces provided most of the cannons and cannonballs for our colonial militia during the American Revolution. All of the iron for "Old Ironsides", the U.S.S. Constitution, was forged in Connecticut. Magnesium extracted from the marble of western Connecticut went into the first atomic bomb.

The first mechanical rock crusher, invented by Eli Whitney Blake of New Haven, created the crushed stone industry, probably the largest mining industry in the United States today.

Our mineral wealth might not be as great as many of the western states, however, our geology is complex and has blessed us with a very diverse suite of minerals to be mined for industry, and appreciated for their beauty.



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And this is the story our mining museum would like to tell. CAMA's Mining Museum officially opened in 2000, and it quickly became apparent that the building was too small to adequately tell the history of Connecticut mining. A "surprise" donation of \$5,000 by a visitor was made to act as seed money for the new wing. Architect and CAMA member Jim De Stefano designed the new wing to look like a typical mine hoisting building.

A concerted effort was then made to raise the money necessary. Expenses were offset thanks to the carpentry and electrical departments of Henry Abbott Technical School who donated their labor.

Finishing touches to the completed structure were made by a stalwart crew of C.A.M.A. members and outside volunteers who many times put in seven day work weeks in order to finish the temporary exhibits in time for our 2006 Fall Festival.

A donated furnace was permanently installed so that the "team" could work throughout the winter renovating the old section of the museum. The heating system will also allow us to have school groups visit in cooler weather.

The mining museum will now consist of two main themes: mining technology (in the old section) and Connecticut's mining and mineral history in the new wing. Archival storage and the reference library and collection will be on the second floor.

The exhibits are far from being finished; however, visitors have and will be surprised with the new exhibits. A twenty foot long life-sized mine tunnel has been constructed to depict old and modern mining

technology. Our fluorescent mineral exhibit is one of the best in the Northeast. Other exhibits include blasting, rock drilling, an electronic map of Connecticut mines, and prospecting techniques. Additional exhibit renovations will take place as time and money permit.

Future exhibits will focus on hands-on activities where the visitor can do a variety of activities, and activate a series of digital video kiosks. Some of the hands-on activities are already in place.

A real 18 inch mine railroad is already under construction and will become operational as soon as a set of 36 volt batteries and charger are donated.

I would like to thank the following for their extreme assistance in making this museum become a reality: Gail Washburn, Carol and John Kent, Jim Anderson, Jim Daly, Dick Greene, Steve Tencza, Steve Thayer, George Cook and Cinder, Eugene Licursi, Richard LaRusso, Dave Barrett, Jim Robinson, Joe Goyette, and Pat Hackett and family.



CAMA member Kevin Margenau helps his four-year-old son, Kyle, try out the stone crusher in the Mining Exhibit Hall.