

Butte Miners' Presentation Candlestick

by Al Winters

A number of presentation candlesticks were made by an exceptional but unknown Butte Montana blacksmith (?) and presented to mining dignitaries from the Butte area. The sticks are adorned with miniature tools and an example owned by Tony Moon is illustrated in Wilson and Bobrink's *Miners Candlestick Book*. The known sticks by this blacksmith (?) are all distinguished by a copper heart dovetailed into the back of the handle. Unfortunately the history of many of these candlesticks and the men they were presented to has been lost.



The candlestick in the pictures was displayed in the World Museum of Mining in Butte, Montana and at that time owned by David Johns of Butte.

The candlestick was acquired by Bill Goldman, mining artifact collector of Payson, Arizona in 2001. At that time, Mr. Johns provided the following history. In 1906 (?) the stick was given to his great grandfather, David F. Johns (B1872-D1941). Mr. D.F.Johns was a miner and prospector and operated a small gold lease in Marysville near Helena for several years. He later worked as the superintendent (?) of the Elkhorn Mine between Butte and Helena. Dave Johns who is now 89 years old does not remember the specifics of how or when his grandfather acquired the candlestick but knew that the original recipient was an important mining figure. He also recalls hearing that seven (7) other Butte tool sticks had been made by a machinist (?) working on the Butte hill whom his grandfather knew.

Mr. Johns does not recall the exact name represented by the engraved letters but hearsay indicates the original recipient of the candlestick may* have been John Benton Leggat, a prominent Montana Mining Engineer. Mr. John Leggat was born in St. Louis, MO in 1869. He completed a course in Mining Engineering in 1890 at Washington University. Following graduation he located in Butte and initially undertook development of several silver mines in Beaverhead County where he managed the Argyle Mine in Vipond Park. After 1893, he operated several mining properties in the Butte District under lease and bond and also conducted an engineering business serving regional mines in the Butte and Helena area. Among other ventures he served as President of the April Fool Gold Mining and Milling Company in Nevada at Delmar and as Director of the Southern Cross Gold Mining Company operating the Cable Mine north of Anaconda, Montana. Leggat also participated as partner and principal in many local residential and business properties.



- There is no known proof (either photographic or documentary) that the stick was presented to Leggat, only hearsay and the documented personal admiration of associates and miners alike who worked for and with Mr. Leggat.

Mr. Leggat was a Freemason and Member of the Algeria Temple in Helena Montana. In 1910 he was instrumental in the founding of the Shiners Bagdad Temple #125 in Butte. At that ceremony he was made an honorary member and presented an engraved copper plate enclosed in a solid electrolytic copper frame made from Butte copper. He served as the 1905 Potentate of the Algeria Temple in Helena, Montana. Other positions held were High Priest, Eminent Commander, Grand Royal Arch Captain and Imperial Representative of the Mystic Shrine. He also was a founding and active member of the Silver Bow B.P.O.E. and a member of the Silver Bow Club and Butte Golf Club.

Mr. Leggat built his elaborate Victorian-era Butte home in 1897 at 401 West Granite Street. The home is on the National Historical list and a favored attraction in Butte. In 1901 he married Ms. Hebe Ashley in what at that time was claimed the most lavish wedding of Helena, Montana. The couple lived in their Butte home until 1913.

Mr. Leggat left Butte in 1913 following consolidation of much of the district properties by the Amalgamated Copper Company (Anaconda). The Progressive Men of Montana carried his biography in 1903 and it was said of him "While men less resourceful and more cautious are thinking of a plan, he is accomplishing a result." The following caricature of Leggat was made in 1907 and published in *Cartoons and Caricatures of Men in Montana*. Note the ore sample bags and Old Glory Mine.



References:

1. Montana History, WIKI, National Register of Historic Places, Silver Bow County
2. History of Montana (Vol. 3) , pg. 37, by Helen Fitzgerald Sanders
3. *Cartoons & Caricatures of Men in Montana*, 1907 by E.A.Thomson
4. *Progressive Men of Montana*, 1903, Chicago-A.M. Bowen & Co. Contributors: David Johns, Bill Goldman, John Burke, Guy Palmer, Lloyd Harkins