

The Bunker Hill Mine by Bob Weldin

The discovery and development of silver-lead mines in the Coeur d'Alene district of Idaho began in 1882. The district quickly became Idaho's most important mining area; it rivaled Colorado's richest strikes and became one of the world's major silver strikes, even greater than the Comstock Lode in Nevada. Of the Coeur d'Alene mines, one of the most famous and for years the country's leading lead-silver producer, was the Bunker Hill and Sullivan Mine.

Historians credit Noah Kellogg with the initial discovery of the Bunker Hill claims in 1885. By 1887, the Bunker Hill and Sullivan Mining and Concentrating Company was formed. The Bunker Hill was named after the Revolutionary War battle of the same name and apparently the Sullivan after the world heavyweight boxing champion of that era. However, one of the early claim stakers was also named Sullivan. The name was shortened to Bunker Hill Company in 1956. By this time, Bunker Hill Company had outgrown its singular mining and concentrating image and had established itself as a world-class mining corporation. It built a lead smelter in 1917, an electrolytic zinc plant in 1928, acquired other mines, both inside and outside the Coeur d'Alene districts, and in general had acquired recognition if not financial interests throughout the world mining community.

The Bunker Hill mine, alone, was the largest in the state until it closed in late 1981. During its prime, the company employed 2,100 Kellogg, Idaho residents, 400 of whom worked in the Bunker Hill mine. At its peak the mine produced 2,300 short tons of ore per day, and contained more than 130 miles of underground workings, ranging from 3,600 feet above sea level to 2,000 feet below sea level. On an annual basis, the lead smelter was producing 125,000 short tons of refined lead (about 16% of the U.S. total), the zinc plant 100,000 short tons of zinc (about 14% of the U.S. total), the silver refinery about 12,000,000 troy ounces of 99.99% pure silver, 3,000 troy ounces of gold and the cadmium plant was producing 360 short tons of refined cadmium. Through 1980, the Bunker Hill mine produced over 35,000,000 tons of ore containing 3,099,878 tons of lead, 160,265,792 ounces of silver and 1,289,858 tons of zinc -- truly a world-class metal producer.

The Coeur d'Alene district and the Bunker Hill Company did not escape hard times. They suffered as well as other mining communities during the 1893 financial panic, and by that time the unions had gained control of all but the largest mine in the district, the Bunker Hill and Sullivan. The company had agreed to raise wages to union scale but refused to recognize the union. As a result, on April 29, 1899, a large group of union members seized a train, loaded it with dynamite, and blew up the Bunker Hill and Sullivan concentrator. The U.S. Army was called in to restore order and union members were denied employment anywhere in the area. Some of those responsible for dynamiting the concentrator were sent to the penitentiary and by the time the troops were withdrawn in April of 1901, the Western Federation of Miners Union was broken. With the exception of the great depression and occasional slumps in the metal prices, the Coeur d'Alene district prospered better than most, until recently.

The Bunker Hill mine and complex were closed in October 1981, reportedly because of a combination of factors: low metal prices high labor costs, lack of concentrates to feed the mill and smelter, and the high cost of compliance to environmental laws. According to the Idaho Statesman, January 28, 1990 (and other newspaper articles), environmental factors were the major reason for the shut down. As the story goes, a fire broke out in the smelter baghouse (used for air filtering) in 1974 allowing lead emission to go out into the atmosphere. Rather than going to the expense of repair and replacement, company officials allegedly continued to operate the smelter. Depending on the account one reads, the equivalent of 11 to 20 years of lead emissions came out of the stack within a year. Children living in the area contracted lead poisoning while deposits of lead, arsenic, and cadmium fouled the soil and water of Silver Valley. EPA officials have designated a 21 square mile area around the complex as a Superfund Site. To date, nearly \$20 million has reportedly been spent on the clean up.

The environmental nightmare is not over for the good people of Kellogg, Idaho, but their economic situation continues to improve along with a cleaner environment. The Bunker Hill mine, under a new limited partnership was back in production at a much reduced rate in September 1988. Reportedly 137 men were working the mine with a current production goal of 1,000 tons of ore per day and a near future projected goal of 2,000 tons per day. Other major mines in the Coeur d'Alene district have learned to adapt to the fluctuating price of silver and increasing costs associated with operating the deepest mines in the U.S.

Don't shed too many tears for these hardy hardrock miners and their descendants -- they're a resilient lot who have learned not to depend totally on mining for their livelihood. Residents of the Silver Valley are capitalizing on tourism by taking advantage of their beautiful mountainous surroundings. To supplement the area's economy

with tourism, Kellogg's City Council is leading a drive to build a \$12 million, three-mile aerial tramway to link the city (refurbished as an alpine village) with the Silverhorn Ski Area. The gondola ride should provide an excellent panoramic view of the old Bunker Hill Holdings, including the site where Noah Kellogg staked the first Bunker Hill and Sullivan claims more than 100 years ago. Half of the money to build the gondola is provided by Federal grant, the other half will come from private capital -- want to buy stock?

No. 900 INCORPORATED JULY 29TH, 1887. 1 Shares

Bunker Hill and Sullivan Mining and Concentrating Co.

OF PORTLAND, OREGON.

Capital Stock, \$3,000,000.



Shares, \$10.00 Each.


This is to Certify, That J. Cameron is entitled to One 10 Shares fully paid and free from assessments, in the Capital Stock of the

Bunker Hill and Sullivan Mining and Concentrating Company,

transferable on the books of the Company, in person or by attorney, upon surrender of this Certificate, and subject to the By-Laws of the Company
Witness our hands, and the Corporate Seal of the Company, at Portland,
 San Francisco, California, this twentieth day of July 7th 1907.

A. B. Secretary. *F. M. Bradley* President.

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THE BUNKER HILL COMPANY

INCORPORATED UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE

This Certifies that


is the owner of

SEE REVERSE FOR CERTAIN DEFINITIONS

FULLY PAID AND NON-ASSESSABLE SHARES OF THE PAR VALUE OF \$25.00 EACH OF THE COMMON STOCK OF THE BUNKER HILL COMPANY, transferable on the books of the Corporation in person or by duly authorized attorney upon surrender of this Certificate properly indorsed.
 This Certificate shall not be valid until countersigned by the Transfer Agent and registered by the Registrar.
 Witness the corporate seal of the Corporation and the corporate signatures of its duly authorized officers.

The Bunker Hill Company

Harry L. Van Eschen
SECRETARY



C. E. Schwab
PRESIDENT

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