

# Rhymes of the Mines

LIFE IN THE UNDERGROUND  
2ND EDITION



Compiled by Janice Coggin

Cowboy  
Miner  
PRODUCTIONS

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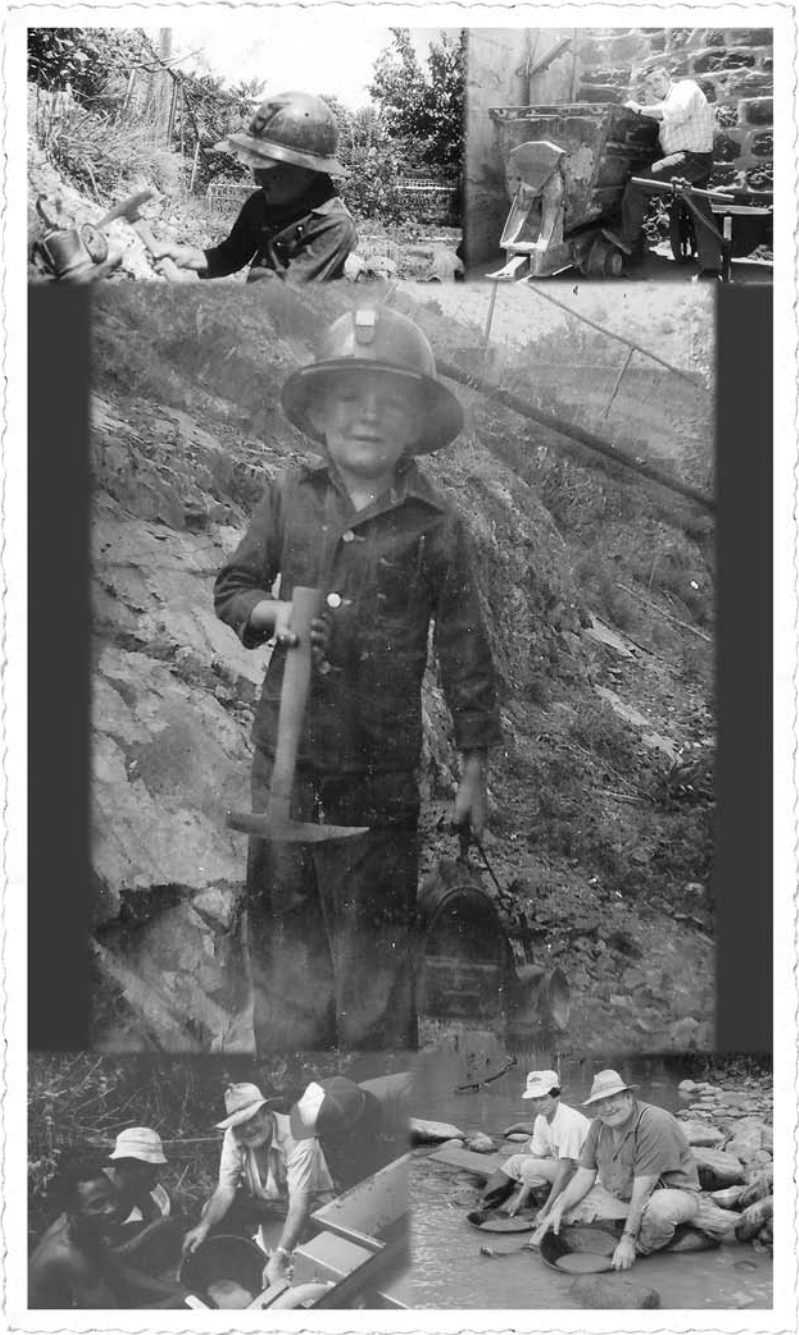
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**The above acknowledgements were taken from the first edition of Rhymes of the Miness and written by Mason Coggin. Any comments by ed. throughout the book are also authored by Mason Coggin.**

This edition of Rhymes of the Miness contains illustrations from several old mining company stock certificates and photos from throughout the world, many taken by Mason Coggin. Some poems that were very popular with our readers have been kept and new poems have been added. I want to thank all that contributed to make this a unique book. This volume is dedicated to Mason Coggin and to the spirits of all miners whose adventurous souls and courageous lives gave the mining community such a marvelous history.

Janice Coggin



# Dedication

This book is dedicated to Mason Coggin, a man who felt as at home in an underground mine as he did in the wilds of the world exploring for placer gold.

Born in Bisbee, Arizona, he often told tales of his boyhood when, equipped with a flashlight or candle, he would explore the many adits (tunnels) surrounding Bisbee.

Work in the underground mines of San Manuel and Bisbee enabled him to attain the funding for his degree in Mining Engineering from the University of Arizona. Following in the footsteps of his grandfather and father, he returned to Bisbee where he began his career as a junior engineer in the underground mines. He worked his way up the ladder to stop engineer. He went on to work at several different mining properties in Arizona, then expanded his scope to the world as he became one of the few placer gold experts in the world. He was a strong advocate for mining, often reminding those he spoke to that without metal, manufacturing or refining, they would be standing naked in the world trying to hunt their food with a club.

His first loves were always the underground and mining history. He wrote several chapters for the Mining History Association's publications and began a history of the Calumet and Arizona Mining Company. This company was owner and operator of mines in the Ajo and Bisbee areas, as well as other properties in the West. They eventually sold to the Phelps Dodge Corporation in the 1930s.

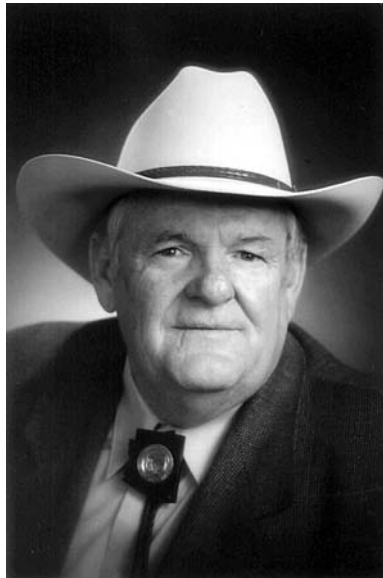
His memory was phenomenal and came to his aid in reciting poetry and in the talks he gave throughout the West on mining history. As a history professor at Arizona State University often said, "If you have a question on mining history, ask Mason." He also served as Director of the Department

of Mines and Mineral Resources for the State of Arizona before retiring.

He never forgot his roots in Bisbee, often donating his time and expertise to the Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum.

His love of poetry started early in his life as he memorized and recited several poems by Robert Service, “The Prospector” being his favorite. After attending a gathering of cowboy poets and musicians in Prescott, Arizona, he became fascinated with classic cowboy poetry and began reciting, soon becoming a familiar figure on stage. Failure to find the books he needed on his favorite authors led to the birth of Cowboy Miner Productions. This publishing company has gone on to be a well-respected producer of books of cowboy and mining poetry, as well as western history.

Although Mason passed away in November of 2000, dedications of poems and CDs remind us of his wide smile, sense of humor, and magnificent recitations. He never met a person he did not like, nor ever forgot a friend.



## With a Wink and a Smile

Comes a time when ev'ry mine runs out of ore  
Veins once rich become barren and poor  
When jacklegs go silent as copper veins end  
Down that drift that doglegs round the bend

And God pulls the last crew from deep underground  
The hoistman pulls a lever, a bell clangs with a sound  
"Why this is good news," says the hoistman,  
with a wink and a smile  
He adjusts his spectacles and rubs his beard awhile...

The townfolk heard this, amid gasps and sudden frowns  
"Whatever do you mean, for the mine has shut down!  
It's the end of an era, never to be the same,  
On what do you base this preposterous claim?"

"Well," he said, "The reasons are many  
So since you asked, by gum, you'll hear plenty!  
Did you see the lone miner who rode the skip this time  
That fine man is a miner leaving a legacy in rhyme!

"Here is a man of integrity, the gentlest of souls,  
One who worked hard, helped others and always met his goals  
And the metals he helped wrest from Virgin Mother Earth  
Made our lives much better, more pleasant, even from birth!

"Yes, this man can look back with pride and dignity  
He changed all of our lives irrevocably!  
Risking life and limb underground, yet all the while,  
He'd say he wouldn't change a thing,  
with a wink and a smile!

“This be a miner who had boundless wealth,  
I mean wealth of the soul, not financial health  
With family and friends, admirers far and wide  
But it never went to his head, for he was pure inside.

“Why, so many times he gave the shirt off his back,  
His dresser drawer always empty because of the shirts it lacked  
This miner is rare, yes he’s one in a mil’  
But sometimes he was underground, or surveying a hill.

“No my friends, this is not a time for sadness or open pity,  
It is a time for jubilation, a celebration in this city!  
The place that he is now, should make us all glad  
Because God needs good miners, and here’s why, lad!

“The Heavens are lit by miners’ candlesticks  
Made of solid gold like the shovels and picks  
God needs miners like good bread needs leaven  
You see souls aren’t harvested, they’re mined in heaven!

“And no need to high grade, God knows only too well,  
Because the Shift Foreman is a fellow named Gabriel  
It’s his job to sort the ore from the gangue of our kind  
As the conveyer goes past carrying souls freshly mined

“Good souls stay in heaven, with golden light so bright  
The rest get poured on the slag heaps of perpetual night  
So be a good miner, honest, and humble, trusting The Lord  
Why, it was the Cousin Jacks who dug the metal for His sword!

“The sword is not for mining, like on earth, He has to drill  
As He roams through the universe, block-caving at will  
So God will be waiting for us upon the heavens so high  
While we toil down here, blasting and mucking, sweat in  
our eye.

“In the meanwhile, our dear departed friend will also be there  
Watching over us, as an angel, from his heavenly chair  
Making sure we don’t tumble down that mine shaft so deep  
Swooping down from above in one heavenly leap.

“Great people never die, they live on in history  
Be it through poetry, mining, or you name it, even infamy!  
So when Mason the Angel looks over his past-life file,  
He tells the other angels, ‘I wouldn’t change a thing’  
with a wink and a smile . . .”

Inspired by the life of Mason Coggin,  
Miner, Engineer, Historian, Poet, Husband, Father,  
and Friend.

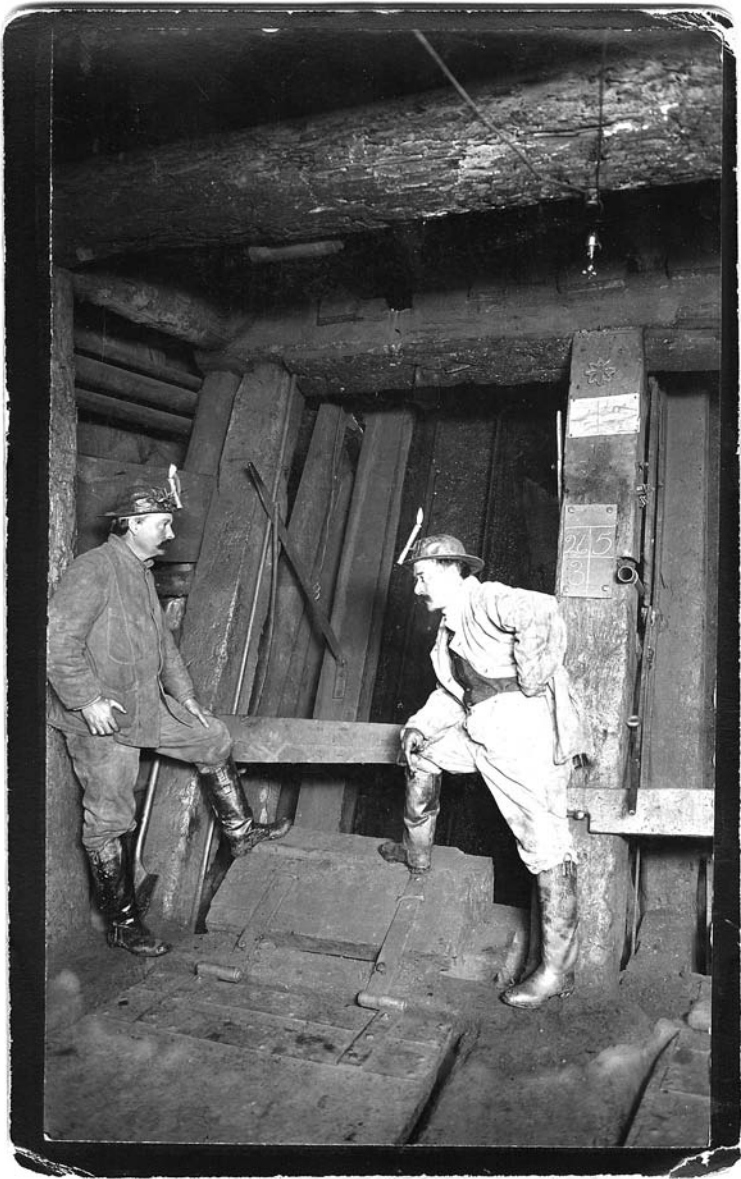
E. A. Jones, Scottsdale, AZ  
November 2000

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RHYMES OF THE MINES



*George A. Newett, on right, and Captain Tom Walters underground in an Ishpeming, Michigan, iron mine, probably in the 1890s. Mr. Newett is Janice Coggin's grandfather.*

## Here's To the Miners

Dedicated to the Miners and their Helpers.

O here's to the miner.  
The miner for me!  
Be he self-made manager,  
Or with his degree,  
He's the first in the land,  
With his silver and gold,  
Iron, copper and lead.  
Young, middle or old.  
He gives to the world  
The best that there is;  
He's the source of the progress—  
Broadness is his.  
For through him the markets  
Have their rise and their fall.  
The future is his—  
He's the cream of them all.  
So here's to the miner,  
Be he Saxon or Celt.  
He's the man that does things  
And gets the result.

Anthony Fitch  
*Ballads of the Western Mines*  
*And Others* 1910

## Tony

I'll tell 'e Lad, just 'ow it 'appened  
'Ow hi 'appened to 'ave the fall  
Hi stepped on a plank-an the plank wasna' there  
So down goes Hi-plank and all.

Me Pard was a fellow called Tony—  
A likeable chap al-around,  
A good one for drillin', hand-blastin'—  
A fair one, at catchin' hup ground.

'E'd keep 'is eye out for the gaffer  
And when the boss would arrive,  
'E'd be workin' like 'ell and damnation  
You'd think 'e would never take five.

'E 'ated those chaps they called Texans  
'E 'and't no use for a Finn,  
The Swedes, the Bohunks and Mexicans  
'E 'ated them creatures like sin.

'E said it was God made the Dagoes  
The Devil, 'e said, made the Dutch,  
But 'oo ever hit was made the Cousin Jack  
'E reckinned, 'e didn't make much.

## LIFE IN THE UNDERGROUND

'E 'd mention the word "category"  
Hi don't know the meanin' o' that-  
Back 'ome ther' the word cat a gory  
Would be nought but a bloody tom-cat.

We went in the mines one mornin'  
Together us wint-- 'im and me  
On the 'ole blame sixteen-'undred  
There was nobody workin' but we.

Hi 'anged my coat on a laggin'  
Hit was there I happened to fall.  
Hi stepped on a plank and the plank wasna' there  
So down goes Hi--plank and all.

There was hi, shoutin' and screechin'  
Hi thought Hi was scheduled to die,  
A post and a bloody great boulder  
Was chokin' the life out of Hi.

Hi thought of 'ome and the little tykes  
And what would 'ome be without me,  
Hi thought on me pore old Missus  
It looked plenty gloomy for she.

Tony got 'urt much that mornin'  
Just a 'elpin' me hout don't you see?  
Hi wouldn't be writin' this minnit  
Hif it 'adn't of been for 'e.

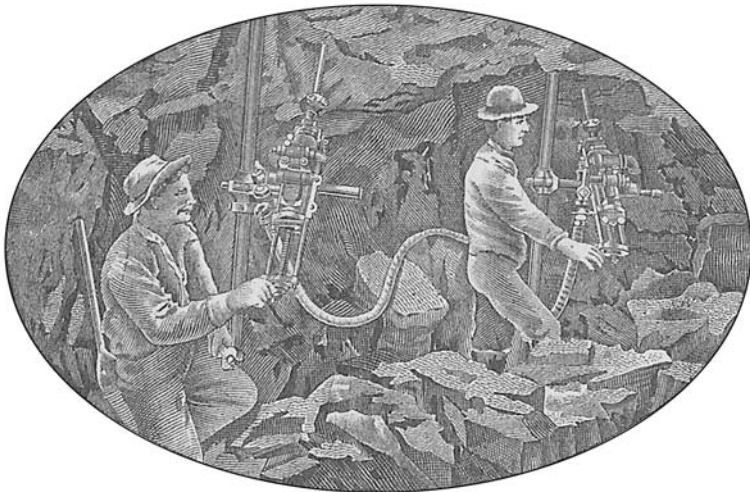
## RHYMES OF THE MINES

No, Tony wasna' a Hero,  
'E only was 'elphin' 'is Pard.  
'Is 'eart was as big as 'is bloomin' 'ead,  
But nothin' 'arf as 'ard.

Hi have learned from close hobobservation  
Of men and of castes and of creeds,  
To pay no 'eed to ther chatter  
But only to watch for men's deeds.

Ned White c. 1920

A version of the poem can be found in *Ned White, Arizona's Bard of Brewery Gulch* edited by Marion White McKinney, Golden Bell Press, Denver, 1967. Ed.



*Vignette from the stock certificate of the  
Arizona Binghamton Copper Company  
Issued in 1919*