



Samuel Peter Heintzelman (1805-1880)

2008 Inductee from Mining's Past

Samuel Peter Heintzelman was a soldier, speculator, and promoter and was one of the few hardy, spirited pioneers who made a substantial contribution to the establishment of Arizona's mining development. He was born in Manheim, Pennsylvania, in 1805, and after graduating from West Point in 1826, was cited for gallantry during service in the Mexican War.

Heintzelman arrived in the Southwest in 1850 as a major in the United States Army, with the mission to establish Fort Yuma. From that position became involved in all aspects of the settlement of what was then the Northwest frontier of Mexico. In 1856, he asked for and received an extended leave from active duty, and was successful in promoting the necessary capital for the organization of the Sonora Exploring & Mining Company, one of the earliest and historically most significant companies formed to exploit Arizona's mineral resources at the Santa Rita and Cerro Colorado Mines in the Santa Cruz Valley. From his position of president of the company, his journal entries from August 1858 to January 1859, provide invaluable insight into the difficulties that faced Arizona's first mineral entrepreneurs. In 1859, Samuel Colt, the arms manufacturer, rescued the company from bankruptcy, and took over the presidency as Heintzelman resumed active duty in the army.

With the advent of the Civil War, Heintzelman received a commission of colonel and was quickly promoted to brigadier general. At the First Battle of Bull Run, he fought with his usual valor, suffering a wound while vainly trying to rally his broken division in a rout of Union forces. He remained in divisional command throughout fall 1861 and winter 1862 and was promoted to major general. His remaining service was undistinguished because of his natural caution and penchant for magnifying the difficulties before him. He was characterized as a stern man of blunt speech and abundant energy. He retired from the army in 1869 and died in the District of Columbia in 1880.