



Thomas F. Walsh (1850–1910)

2003 Inductee from Mining's Past

Tom Walsh, a staunch, hard working Irishman with a handsome red moustache, was born in Clonmel, County Tipperary. He apprenticed as a millwright and became a jack of all trades carpenter. At age 19, he migrated to Massachusetts, then to Golden, Colorado, where he worked for the Colorado and Southern Railroad for two years and caught “the mining fever,” as he always called it. In 1874, he joined the Black Hills, South Dakota, gold rush and there met Smokey Jones, who offered him half interest in his Deadwood prospect. On the advice of experienced mining friends, Walsh turned down Jones' offer, only to later find out that it had become the fabulous Homestake gold mine. This was a lesson he was never to forget.

In 1877, Walsh bought the Grand Hotel in Leadville, Colorado, married, sold the hotel and then moved to Denver. By now, with improved knowledge, experience and a keen mining intuition, he decided to move to Ouray, Colorado. High above Ouray, in Imogene Basin, there were a number of "barren" silver claims. Here in 1881, Walsh recognized a rich gold telluride vein in an old tunnel on the Gertrude claim. This represented his discovery of the rich Camp Bird gold mine.

In 1902, the mine was sold to a London syndicate for cash plus ore, plus stock, and the Walshes, on the urging of John Hayes Hammond, moved to Washington, D.C., and became national and international celebrities. Walsh's daughter, Evalyn, married Edward Beal McLean, heir to the Washington Post and Cincinnati Enquirer, and they became co-owners of the infamous Hope diamond. The Walshes were friends of presidents and kings and Mr. Walsh represented the United States with his family at the World Exposition in Paris, having been appointed to that position by the President.

The town of Ouray and Tom Walsh had become wealthy together. While owner of the Camp Bird, he saw to it that his miners were compensated better than what any union could assure.

Before he died, he endowed the town with a beautifully stocked library and saved the community hospital from financial ruin.