



Ben Williams (1852-1925)

Mine Superintendent and General Mine Manager

2013 Inductee from Mining's Past

Ben Williams, born in February 1852, was the son of a prominent family of Welsh metallurgists from Swansea. The family emigrated to the United States in 1855 settling in Connecticut, the American center of brass and copper refining. The family then moved on to copper refining works near Houghton, Michigan, and subsequently to San Francisco in 1874 where William's father and brother-in-law, DeWitt Bisbee, founded the mining firm of Bisbee, Williams & Company.

Williams' first job in the Arizona Territory was as Superintendent of the San Xavier Mine near Tucson. In 1879, he relocated to Charleston, Arizona, a smelter town along the San Pedro River, and prospected in the Huachuca Mountains. The following year, the nearby Copper Queen claims situated adjacent to Mule Gulch were purchased by a group of mining investors and Bisbee, Williams & Company was hired to manage the mine. Bisbee, Williams and Company recognized the mine's potential and placed Ben Williams and his brother Lewis in charge of general operations and of smelting respectively.

Together the brothers dedicated their technical expertise and procedural skills necessary to develop the mine and built a small smelter to extract the copper from the raw ore. By the end of 1880, the mine had produced more than 700 tons of copper representing about 70% of all the copper produced from Arizona mines during that year!

Dr. James Douglas, a metallurgical engineer from Phelps Dodge & Co. was dispatched in 1882 to examine the area and his company purchased the adjoining Atlanta Claim. Two years later, when the Atlanta ore deposit bordering both mines was simultaneously discovered, the two mines merged to avoid costly litigation and formed the Copper Queen Consolidated Mining Company with Douglas as President and Williams as general manager. In 1897, when Williams

Mining Foundation of the Southwest
American Mining Hall of Fame

learned that the free masons were holding the Masonic Grand Lodge of Arizona Meeting at the Caverns situated 350' below the surface of the Copper Queen Mine, Williams ordered the interior to be lit by electricity! He realized that the grandeur of the Caverns would attract visitors worldwide! As trade and commerce increased, Mule Gulch's population grew sufficiently to warrant a post office and the town was renamed after Bisbee for his absolute devotion and financial support in ore prospecting.

By Williams' retirement in 1899, Bisbee had emerged as a vibrant copper mining town and was known as the "Queen of the Copper Camps" in no small part due to William's exemplary and capable leadership. Williams passed away on September 1, 1925 and many members of the Copper Queen management attended the funeral. Williams will always be remembered as an important Arizona pioneer and father of the Copper Queen Mine.