



[William Phipps Blake \(1826-1910\)](#)

2012 Inductee from Mining's Past

William Phipps Blake was born in New York City on June 1, 1826. He attended Yale as an undergraduate, and then obtained his advance degree in 1852 from the College's "School of Applied Chemistry," later known as Sheffield Scientific School.

Blake enjoyed, according to his friend Rossiter W. Raymond, "a long, honorable, laborious and useful career" as geologist, writer and teacher. Persuaded in 1853 by geologist Josiah D. Whitney to join the R.S. Williamson government expedition charged with location of a railroad route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, the new graduate made the first of many transcontinental journeys "geologizing," as he put it. Returning from California in November, 1854, Blake finished his report, and married Caroline Hayes on Christmas day of the following year. They made their home in Mill Rock, Connecticut, near New Haven, with "Professor" Blake making New Haven home base while embarking on frequent geological consulting trips throughout the American West, and to Japan and Russian Alaska.

Blake found himself almost constantly in demand by mining companies engaged in mineral litigation, especially "apex" cases, throughout the West, consulting in places like Tombstone and Bisbee, Arizona, Eureka and Virginia City, Nevada and Leadville, Colorado. His 320 notebooks (1847-1910), now housed at the Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, offer an unsurpassed glimpse into the life of a peripatetic geological professional, one of the "lace-boot brigade," to use historian Clark Spence's label. Selected shortly after graduation to serve as commissioner to a New York City scientific fair, Blake did similar duty at international expositions at Paris (1867 and 1878), Vienna (1873) and the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876.

Author of numerous reports for government agencies and private clients, Blake also contributed heavily to the professional publications of the day, particularly the Engineering and Mining Journal and Mining and Scientific Press. Blake taught geology and related subjects at several

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institutions, rounding out his academic career at University of Arizona beginning with the 1895-1896 at the School of Mines. He died, at almost 84 years of age, just a few days after accepting an honorary degree from a former employer, the University of California, Berkeley.