



Felix P. McDonald (1875 – 1936)

Block Caving Innovator

2023 Inductee from Mining's Past

Felix McDonald was born in 1875 in England. He came to the United States in 1887, first living in Pennsylvania before moving to Utah in 1899. He married Mary Ann Hyland that same year. They had six children.

He worked as a miner in Mercur, Utah, where his older brother John was the superintendent. From Mercur, Felix moved north to Bingham Canyon, which was a hotbed of activity with silver, lead and copper mines. There, he worked at, and became superintendent of the Commercial mine, then went to the developing Ohio Copper mine, which bordered other promising properties - Boston Consolidated and Utah Copper – all in the Bingham Canyon area.

Here, as superintendent, he developed a system of caving ore into raises feeding grizzlies over transfer raises. While this method involved driving additional raises, it was more economical due to the decrease in manpower needed than the alternate caving method which used tramming levels to move the caved ore to transfer raises.

When the Anaconda Copper Co. acquired a major interest in the Inspiration and Live Oak porphyry copper deposits near Miami, Arizona, they determined that the Ohio Copper caving method to be the best suited for these properties and hired Felix McDonald as the general superintendent to develop these mines. He successfully developed Inspiration and soon, other block caving operations adopted this method. His method is still in use today.

In addition to his work at Inspiration, he traveled to South America to help set up other Anaconda properties. Inspiration Consolidated Copper Co. honored him by naming the main shaft at their Christmas Mine after him.