

Headframe and No. 8 Shaft Audio Tour

Chapter 5, Stop 4

2:50

Once the miners began going underground, they needed a hoisting system, which you will see in the engine house. They also needed a headframe. The current headframe, which is made of steel and erected in 1924, was the third headframe for this shaft. It was constructed at the same time they built the new engine house, switched to an electric hoist, and expanded the depth they could travel underground. It was erected over the No. 8 shaft, which is the shaft that visitors to the mine use when going on tour.

You may be wondering how many shafts there were on the property. The answer is 13. There were numbered shafts and shafts with names, but they were scattered throughout the property. The No. 8 shaft is the deepest, going at least 2341 feet underground. You can still see one of the other headframes and shafts – the Alaska shaft – on our hiking club trail.

If you look at the headframe, you will notice it is angled. This 78-degree angle is the result of the ore deposits lying at that angle underground. The pie shaped section near the bottom of the headframe is where the ore skip rolls, so it can dump the ore in the awaiting “Larry” car. From here the ore is transported to the crusher house. You may be wondering why the car is called the “Larry” car. Was it named after someone called Larry? No, it actually is a term that comes from England – the Lowry Car. When the many nationalities pronounced the word Lowry, it sounded like Larry and the name stuck.

Take a look at the long black box located on the awning wall. This is the tag in/tag out board. When a miner would go underground, they would first “tag in”. This meant they took their miner’s number tag (a flat, circular piece of metal with a number punched on it) and moved it on the board from out to in. This was a safety procedure used in mining. This indicated that the miner was located someplace “in” the mine. If there were an emergency, the mine rescue team could immediately determine how many people were underground. It was important for miners to remember to “tag out” when they came back to the surface, or people would still think they were underground. This tag in/tag out board was checked each shift to determine that everyone had left the mine.

The shaft is divided into three parts – an east, west and man way. The cages move up and down tracks in the east and west sections. The man way area is where all the utilities run and where the escape ladder is housed. If for some reason, there were an emergency, the miners or rescue team could use the man way to move between the levels of the mine. It is still operational today.