

75 Years of Mining Memories! 1934-2009

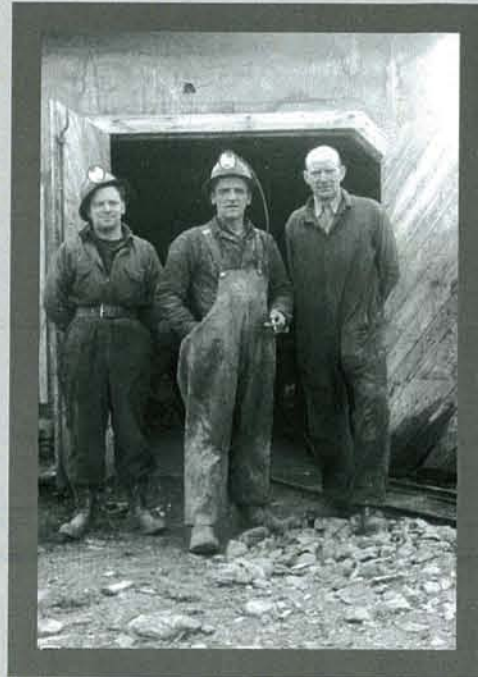
Yellowknife, NWT

We usually see 1934 as the year Yellowknife began. A gold discovery by Johnny Baker on the east side of Yellowknife Bay in that year was good news for down-trodden men and women of the Depression. Hundreds of people came to Yellowknife Bay area to look for gold.

Claims were staked, mines developed, and a small town was built. The Con Mine became the NWT's first gold producer with the pouring of a brick in 1938. Early Yellowknife was a bustling boomtown catering to the needs of the mining companies and independent prospectors of the region. Nestled on the shores of the big lake, Yellowknife was a community of tents, log cabins, and an assortment of pioneer characters.

World War II stunted the growth of the settlement. As workers left to join the war, the gold mines closed. But Yellowknife was not to fade into history. In 1944 it was announced that massive gold deposits had been located at the Giant Mine, which came into production in 1948. Mines reopened, and new mines were found, and Yellowknife prospered. It quickly grew into a permanent town to cater to the needs of the miners and their families and became a regional center for transportation, goods and services. Named capital of the Northwest Territories in 1967, Yellowknife has managed to retain the character and spirit of a small northern town built on gold.

All mines have to eventually close. The Con Mine, after 65 years in operation, closed at the end of 2003. The Giant Mine, a producer since 1948, closed in 2004. But Yellowknife still owes a lot of its prosperity to mining. It supplies services and workers to the diamond mines north of town. With its large airport and road access, it is a hub for mineral activity throughout the northern Territories.



Our Mining History

A rough estimate suggests that the NWT gold mines have produced over 15 million ounces of gold, most of which was extracted from the volcanic rocks of the Yellowknife mines. A vast network of gold mining tunnels, stretched far below the city's streets, has provided employment for Yellowknife residents for over 65 years. Many mines have opened and closed in the region. If you are looking for evidence of our mining heritage, you do not have to look very far. Although now closed and under remediation, you can still see buildings at the Con and Giant Mines on either end of town.

You can also see some of Yellowknife's historic buildings on city streets. There are many displays of old machinery, art work, and information plaques scattered around the city that provide a link to our 75 year mining history.

Robertson Headframe

Con Mine produced gold between 1938-2003 and was an important source of employment for the community. Its most dominant feature is the Robertson shaft headframe. It is the first structure you can see in Yellowknife when you fly in, and boaters on Great Slave Lake use it as a beacon.

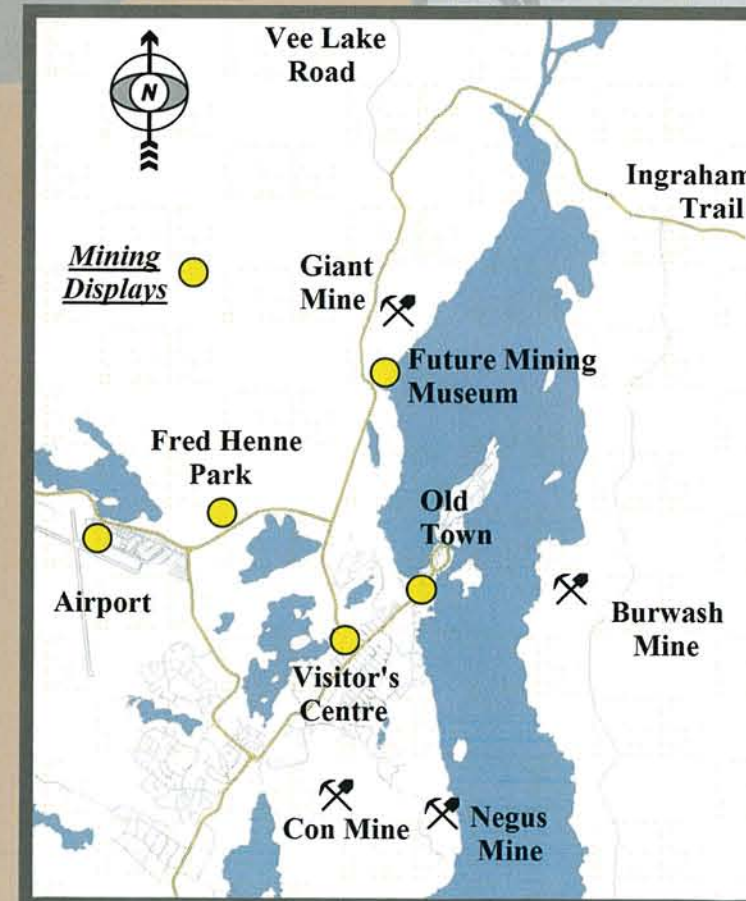
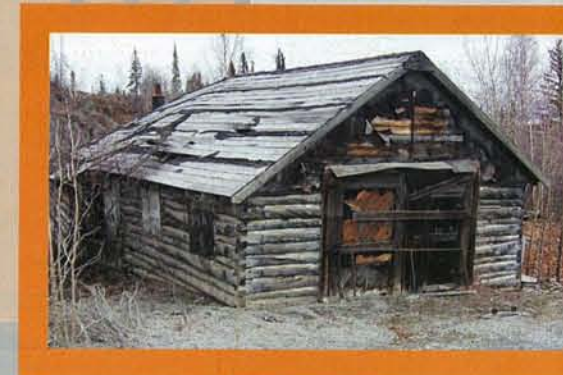


headframe as it is a fitting symbol for Yellowknife and could be put to other uses.

It was put into operation in 1977 and stands 250 feet tall, making it the tallest structure in the NWT and the shaft it serviced is 6,240 feet deep. The city is currently exploring the geothermal potential from this shaft as the ambient temperature at the bottom of the mine was as high as 80 degrees F. The city is also looking at keeping the

Negus Cook Shack

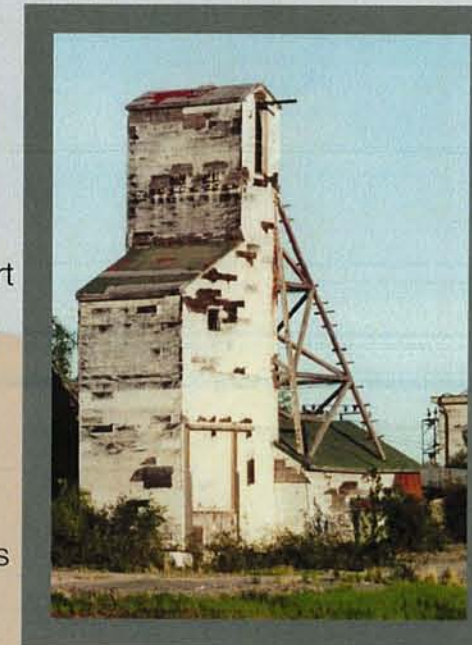
The Negus gold mine operated between 1939-1952. Its mine manager, Jock McNiven, became Yellowknife's first mayor. One of its original buildings is the log cook shack, built by Larry Sheck and Fred McNiski. Imagine yourself eating the best northern grub in this shack, and appreciate the rustic accommodations of our early miners!



Giant Mine

The largest gold mining operation in Yellowknife was the Giant Mine, in operation between 1948-2004. You pass right through the old property as you drive north on the Inghram Trail. The main cluster of buildings surround C-Shaft, 2,000 feet deep. The open pits you see along the highway were excavated in the 1970s when gold prices were high.

Several large concrete tanks can be seen on the hill above the mine, visible from Yellowknife Bay and Old Town. This is part of a recovery plant that would recover the gold from old mine wastes, but the project never worked properly and was abandoned.



Gold from Giant was tied up in the mineral arsenopyrite. In roasting this ore, arsenic trioxide was produced and stored in chambers underground. They plan to freeze these chambers and keep them frozen with thermal siphons to ensure the arsenic trioxide doesn't escape into the environment.

The Giant Mine townsite will be the site of an NWT Mining Museum. The main exhibits will be inside the old recreation hall with extensive outdoor displays in the area. The old A-shaft buildings will be fixed up to provide an example of what a mine shaft looked like.

When completed, it will be a great resource for the history of our important mining and mineral exploration industry, and geological past. It is a work in progress, and you can see several outdoor displays of mining machinery with interpretive signs.



The NWT MINING HERITAGE SOCIETY

The NWT Mining Heritage Society was formed in Yellowknife, NWT, in July 2002 and is governed by a Board of Directors. It is a registered non-profit society and has charitable status. The Society and its members are committed to preserving the mining and geological history of the NWT and works towards the construction of a mining museum at Giant Mine in Yellowknife.

Above is a picture of the recreation hall, the main exhibit facility. Renovations are underway.

For More Information

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Mining Displays

Take your camera when you go visit displays of old mining equipment at these locations:

- Giant Mine Public Boat Launch
- Northern Frontier Visitors Centre
- Yellowknife Airport
- Old Town



Learn About Rocks

Unique mineral and rock samples from across the NWT and Nunavut, including the oldest rock in the world, can be seen in display cases around town at these places:

- Yellowknife Airport security gate
- Greenstone Building (Franklin Ave.)
- NWT Geoscience Office

Diamond Tourism

Canada's first diamond mines were staked in the NWT in the early 1990s, and the first diamond producer was the Ekati Mine at Lac De Gras, in 1998. Since that time, four other diamond mines have come on stream in the NWT-Nunavut. Learn about the geology and story behind their discovery at these facilities:

- Northern Frontier Visitors Centre
- Rio Tinto Diavik Diamond Mines downtown office (Franklin Ave.)

More to Explore

The adventurous may wish to hike the Vee Lake Road to its end and see the old **Crestaurum Mine** shaft, a small gold exploration project from 1946. It is a great day hike and a well-used route. You can hike the **Tin Can Hill** trail (an old YK dump) and visit the old **Con Mine Camp**, now abandoned. A drive up the Ingraham Trail will take you past the blue headframe of the **Ptarmigan Mine**, a recent gold producer that is now abandoned.

Historical and Geological Walking Tours

Anybody interested in local history or geology may like to pick up any number of self-guided tours at the Northern Frontiers Visitors Centre. There are historical tour guides available for Downtown and Old Town Yellowknife, geology guides for the Frame Lake Trail, Fred Henne Park, Cameron River Falls, and the Ingraham Trail. You can also find a good collection of northern and local books at the Yellowknife Book Cellar.



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