

Herman Ehrenberg (1818-1866)

2007 Inductee from Mining's Past

Herman Ehrenberg led an extraordinary life of adventure representative of the colorful characters that founded this country and also made significant contributions to the foundations of Arizona's mining legacy. Ehrenberg was born in Prussia and as a teenager traveled to New York. In 1835, he enlisted with the New Orleans Greys on behalf of what would become the Texas Republic. After fighting in the Battle of Bexar, he served under Col. James W. Fannin at the Battle of Coleto, where he was taken prisoner and subsequently survived the Goliad Massacre by escaping in the confusion of the mass killing and swimming the San Antonio River. After another capture by Mexican troops, Ehrenberg escaped a second time. After the Texas Revolution, he worked as a merchant between New Orleans and various Texas ports. During the period 1842-1844, he returned to Germany for health reasons and during this time wrote his memoir of the Texas Revolution, taught English, and learned mining engineering and surveying with the help of his brother, who was enrolled in the mining school at Eisleben.

Ehrenberg appears to have returned to the United States in early 1844, traveled to Oregon and then on to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), where he published a map of the streets of Honolulu in 1845. Ehrenberg returned to the mainland in 1847, working on a merchant ship. He traveled to Spanish California during the Mexican-American War, where he worked out of La Paz, Baja California. It was during this time that he was cited for bravery in assisting the American military in rescuing several American sailors held by Mexican guerillas. He then went north and stayed on in California for the gold rush where he found little success. He did, however, meet Charles Poston in San Francisco in 1854, and it was with Poston's Sonora Exploring and Mining Company, headquartered in Tubac, Arizona, during 1854-1861, that Ehrenberg made his first contributions to Arizona mining. He worked as a surveyor and mining engineer at the Salado and Cerro Colorado Mines, and prospected the area from the Santa Cruz Valley westward to Ajo and otherwise assisted Poston in his efforts to establish Arizona as a separate territory. As a part of

Mining Foundation of the Southwest American Mining Hall of Fame this effort, Ehrenberg drafted the first map of the area of the Gadsden Purchase, which resulted in his being hailed as "one of the greatest surveyors and map makers ever to visit the Western United States."

During 1862, Ehrenberg (having escaped from Arizona to California during the Civil War) returned from California to join the rush to the Colorado River gold placers, where he was responsible for the organization of the La Paz and Castle Dome Mining Districts. He took an active part in the development of the Picacho Mine near La Paz and the Harcuvar Copper Mines. In 1866, he was appointed probate judge for Yuma County and also apparently served as an Indian Agent for the Mohave Tribe. He was killed by unknown assailants near Dos Palmas, California, while returning from a trip to San Bernardino in 1866.