



Henry Lesinski (1836-1924)

Developer of the Morenci Mine, Arizona 2017 Inductee from Mining's Past

Mine Infrastructure Developer Henry Lesinski was born in Poland. Following his father's death, he was sent to England at age 14 to learn stone and wood carving. He saved enough money to go to Australia where he worked on road crews and in the gold fields. With \$600 in savings, he went to America to pan for gold in California. After learning his uncle was in New Mexico, he joined him, formed a partnership and became a successful merchant around Las Cruces buying and selling local grains to the government.

In 1872, he was approached by Robert Metcalf for financial backing to develop claims near Morenci, AZ. Lesinski ultimately bought the controlling interest in Metcalf's holdings and formed the San Francisco Mining Company. This venture had to overcome problems from hostile Apaches, smelting complications, fuel availability, transportation logistics and marketing. At times, profits from the store in Las Cruces were all that kept the operation afloat.

Transportation was solved by constructing and operating Arizona's first railroad, a 20-inch narrow gage track. Fuel for both smelting and the railroad was charcoal made from mesquite and scrub oak. Lesinski also hired Mexicans experienced in smelting to build and operate a smelter. Later, a larger smelter was built, operations expanded and problems minimized.

Six mines were established by Lesinski's firm, employing 600 men. In 1882, a British firm bought Lesinski's operations for \$1,200,000 which became known as the Arizona Copper Company, Ltd.

Lesinski was also an early developer of the City of El Paso establishing a general merchandising business. He died in New York City.