



THE TEXAS BISON STUDENT STUDY GROUP JOURNAL

“The Official State Precious Metal of Texas”

By

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OCTOBER 23, 2010 –SHAFTER SILVER MINE-Presidio ISD Lucy Rede Franco Middle School (LRFMS) students embark on a hands-on expedition to explore and discover the history, science and technology associated with the emerging Shafter Silver Mining operations as an after-school student enrichment program sponsored by The STAR DAY Foundation of El Paso in partnership with the Rio Grande Mining Company of Shafter owned by the Aurcana Corporation, a junior mining company headquartered in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Mr. Lenic Rodriguez, Aurcana Corporation CEO is a Texas history buff. Mr. Rodriguez designated Mr. Sandy McVey, Shafter Silver Mine Project Manager, to pioneer and lead an effort to organize a team of experts to provide the LRFMS students and supervising adults with a comprehensive overview of the history, science and technology associated with mining operations. Pictured is one of two groups of students that explored the mine. Photographs were taken by Dennis M. Kulvicki.

The State of Texas has customarily recognized a variety of official symbols as tangible representations of the state's culture and history.

The precious metal silver has played a prominent role in the story of the Lone Star State, and it continues to be a visible part of Texas culture, reflecting the enduring influence of Spanish colonial design and the western heritage that is so much a part of the state's lore.

Silver has been mined in Texas for more than three centuries, beginning shortly after the Spanish established their first permanent settlements in the area in the late 1600s; the first mines were founded by Franciscan friars who dug for silver deposits near El Paso, and these same sites were worked periodically for the next 200 years.

In the late 1800s, prospectors began exploring other parts of West Texas, with figures such as John W. Spencer, Samuel B. Buckley, Lieutenant John L. Bullis, and Colonel William R. Shafter focusing their efforts on Presidio County; this led to the opening of the Shafter Mining District, which was the site of the famous Presidio Mine; operated between 1884 and 1947, it produced more than 90 percent of all the silver that has ever been mined in Texas and became a prominent business that spurred greater development in the Big Bend region.

Other mining districts in the state also yielded silver; Hudspeth and Culberson Counties were home to the Van Horn-Allamore and the Plata Verde Districts, and Hudspeth County also contained the Quitman Mountains District; in addition, Brewster County was the site of the Altuda Mountain District, and mining took place at locations in Llano, Mason, and Gillespie Counties in the Hill Country; in total, Texas mines yielded more than 33 million fine ounces of silver, which had a value of nearly \$23.5 million, between 1885 and 1952; the manual labor of carving these riches from the rocks fell to a hardy group of miners who, in true Texan fashion,

used their skill and determination to complete a difficult and dangerous job.

Most mining came to an end in the 1950s, but interest in harvesting the state's silver deposits continues; 20 million troy ounces of the metal are believed to still remain in the Shafter Mining District, and resources of this kind may prove profitable given silver's widespread use in commercial and industrial applications, where it plays a role in everything from photography to coin making, x-rays, water treatment, and electronics.

Jewelry makers and other artisans also rely on this precious metal, and the stately sheen of silver is a key element in beautiful stylistic designs, both rustic and refined, that can be seen throughout Texas; in belt buckles, tie clasps, and boot decorations, it is a staple of the western-wear fashions that harkens back to the state's pioneer past; moreover, silver's rich, pure luster also makes it a favorite material for religious jewelry and other devotional objects, as well as any item or decoration that may benefit from its luxurious, glittering hues.

In both its historical and economic significance and its enduring connections to Texas imagery and culture, silver is a fitting symbol for the state and its people, and it is indeed appropriate that this metal receive special legislative recognition.

NOTE: The text above is the text of House Concurrent Resolution (HCR 102) filed on February 19, 2007, STAR DAY, by State Representative Pete P. Gallego, Jr. at the request of The Texas Silver Student Study Group (The Group). The bill designates "Silver" as the "Official State Precious Metal of Texas." State Senator Carlos Uresti volunteered to act as the bill's sponsor. The Group was organized on October 16, 2006, the birthday of Major General William Rufus Shafter (1835-1906), at Presidio ISD Lucy Rede Franco Middle School (LRFMS) as an after-

school student enrichment program under the supervision of School Principal Teresa Porras sponsored by The STAR DAY Foundation and guided by volunteer teachers and parents. The primary goals of The Group are: to provide students with the opportunity to explore and discover the history, heritage and uses of silver; to study and learn about the silver mining and ore processing technologies being pioneered and led by the Aurcana Corp. of Vancouver, British Columbia, owner of the Shafter Silver Mine in Presidio County; to honor and remember the life and achievements of the mine founders and early pioneers and leaders of the Shafter community; to evaluate and recommendation donation premium applications of Texas silver and to plan, develop and conduct expeditions to explore and discover the mine in partnership with area schools. Governor Rick Perry, a 1999 STAR DAY Founder, issued a Commendation Letter to honor and recognize the LRFMS principal, teachers and students for their service achievement of merit in proposing HCR 102.

Editor's Note Dennis M. Kulvicki is a founder and president of The STAR DAY Foundation established in 1999 as a Texas nonprofit 501(c)3 tax exempt organization with a primary mission to carryout the legislative intent of the STAR DAY bill passed in 1999 in partnership Texas schools and other organizations by celebrating each year the birthday of the State of Texas on February 19th each year to inspire and motivate students to explore and discover the founding and founders of the State of Texas at partnering schools.

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