

**The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University**  
**Ohio Mining Journal**

**Title:** The Certificated Mine Boss

**Creators:** [Keighley, Frederick C.](#)

**Issue Date:** 1897

**Citation:** Ohio Mining Journal, no. 26 (1897), 125-131.

**URI:** <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/32726>

**Appears in Collections:** [Ohio Mining Journal: Whole no. 26 \(1897\)](#)

## THE CERTIFICATED MINE BOSS.

HON. FRED. C. KEIGHLEY, UNIONTOWN, PA.

I am aware that Certificated Mine Bosses have never been required by the people of the State of Ohio, yet I have an idea that the members of the Ohio Institute of Mining Engineers would not be averse to the presentation of a paper on this subject.

To begin with, let me say, that I am a Certificated Mine Boss myself, and hold Certificate No. 1 of the Seventh Bituminous District coal mines of Pennsylvania, being one of the number that was first examined for such certificates in that State.

I am very proud of that piece of paper, as well as two others that hang on the wall at my house, and whilst I am telling of one, I may as well state that the others are, one a certificate to act as fire boss, and the other a commission to act as mine inspector.

I make no use at this time of any of those papers and will likely never make use of them again, yet money could not buy them.

You, no doubt, will ask why I value them so highly, and I will anticipate that question, by saying that I so value them because by them I can now show to those that are my subordinates at the operations I am now conducting, that I have traveled the same road that they have, and that I am not only able to judge their work, but realize their value and appreciate their services.

This paper came to be written through rather a singular circumstance, which I will relate in order that you may understand the motive of the paper, and I will here say that I never write a paper without a motive or object in view.

The circumstance I refer to above was as follows, viz.: At the mines I am now superintendent over, we have young men who are anxiously endeavoring to fit themselves for examination to get the very same kind of documents that I possess and value so highly.

Some of these young men are miners that want certificates to act as fire bosses; some of them are fire bosses that want certificates to act as mine bosses; others are mine bosses that want

commissions to act as mine inspectors, and one young man, who is our mining engineer, is a candidate for appointment as an engineer on the board that grants commissions to act as mine inspector.

It is altogether likely that most of these young men will sooner or later get the coveted papers, for to want a thing real badly is one of the best ways to get it.

Among these young men is one who is already a fire boss and a good one, too.

He has for a long time been studying to prepare himself for examination for a certificate to act as mine boss, but now, that the time draws near for the examination, he says he will not strive for a certificate any longer.

Upon being asked why he should act so singularly, he stated that there was no use in men trying to get certificates, when there were so many already that had certificates that had no position, and not only that, but men, who before they got their papers were good, industrious workmen, and were now discouraged idlers, worthless for anything.

No doubt it will be evident to you, that this young man is looking down at the failures, and not looking up at the successes as he should do.

If the real truth were known it would doubtless be discovered that those dismal failurers, and perhaps the halting young man himself, believe that the certificates, and not the man, made the mine boss, and perhaps this very sort of reasoning is what keeps the great State of Ohio from falling into line with Pennsylvania, Illinois and other states that have faith in certificated men.

I grant that a certificate does not and never will make a mine boss, for mine bosses are born, not made, just as the statesman, the artist, or the actor; but the fact that a State gives certificates does not mean, that such certificates are blinds for incompetency.

I know men that hold certificates, and good certificates, too, that never have, and never will, hold a position three months as a mine boss, but that is no fault of the certificate; no fault of the examiners, and no fault of the system. These men have simply mistaken their vocation in life, or in other words, they were not born mine bosses.

Now I have granted that certificates will not make mine bosses, but I do not, and never will admit, that mine bosses will not be developed by the system of certification. The strife for certificates brings out the light that was hidden, as it were, under a bushel and that but for the certificate would never have shone.

The examination for certificates develops the latent talent and brings it to the front, but the certificate never sustains the incompetent, for they soon show their true colors and are rejected regardless of the certificate.

I will admit that certification induces cramming for the examinations, that is, candidates make lumber boxes out of their heads, thinking that the exhibition of a great variety of knowledge is a good way of proving their ability, but they do not succeed, for knowledge is no proof of ability, but an aptness to apply knowledge when it is needed, is ability itself.

I have closely watched the effects of certification of mine officials and I unhesitatingly endorse and recommend its adoption by the State that I first learned how to work and think in, and that is, the cradle of so many Presidents and great men.

I am proud of the fact that whilst I am but a mine superintendent, that I was rocked in a mighty good cradle, and that Pennsylvania has shown a good work for an Ohio man to do—the best, yes the highest work I could do, would be to persuade you (for it lies in your hands) that it is high time, that Ohio joined the procession that Pennsylvania, Illinois and other states have headed towards the topmost pinnacle of mining science.

I have pointed out to you the real function of certification, viz.: That it means development and not creation, so perhaps I ought also to show you some of its idiosyncrasies.

The moment a man gets a certificate as a fire boss, he never rests until he gets a mine boss certificate, then his next ambition is to get a commission as mine inspector, and if he lives long enough he will be after something else, and he never stops reaching until he lands among the stars.

I know what I am talking about, for I have, as I said before, traveled the same road and have been reaching myself, and have gotten from roustabout to fire boss; fire boss to mine boss; mine boss to mine inspector, and am still as hot as ever after something still ahead, which is being nursed in secret.

What holds good in my case, holds good in a thousand others, for I see it around me all the time.

The miners, the drivers, the roadmen, the engineers, the fire bosses, mine bosses, the superintendents, and even a mine owner, here and there, are many of them connected with the different correspondent schools, and there is going to be a harvest after a while.

Next spring a graduate of Yale, from our district, is going to be a candidate for mine inspector, and wonder of wonders, he is a young man who at one time worked as a miner's boy (at a

mine I once managed) and by money he has earned himself, he has been able to become a student at Yale. My prayer is, that this Yale man will get there, and I believe he will.

The mine inspectors of Pennsylvania (all honor to them) have almost all handled the pick and shovel, and fairly hewn their way to the inspectorship, but their day is almost over, for the miner's boy who went to college is going to take their place, and the time is not far ahead when the Board of Mine Inspectors of the State of Pennsylvania will be composed of men that have gone from the pick to the college, and from the college to the inspectorship. This will be the full fruits of certification.

You who represent the bone, sinews and brains of Ohio's mines cannot afford to allow your State to wait until that late day to follow in the footprints of her sister states. You had far better join them now, and reach the goal with them.

As, with many other things, there have been some features that are undesirable that have crept in along with certification.

You all know that everything has its parasites. No fruit grows that does not have its ravaging insects, and so it is with certification.

Whilst I was mine inspector, here and there, I saw a mine boss who had gained a certificate, and had been successful, that had allowed his ambition to get away with him too far. He was filching from the time that belonged to his employers and to the men who had entrusted their lives to his care. He was so wrapped up in his studies that he went about like a man in a dream, seeing many things, but realizing nothing.

I went one day to inspect a certain mine, and the mine boss, and his fire boss, went along with me. As I went through the mine I asked question after question of the mine boss, and got very vague answers. I got a little huffy about this and the fire boss said, in an apologetic way, "He is in a deep study. I often have to ask him two or three times before I get an answer." The fire boss seemed to think it was a great thing for a man to lose himself in that way.

Now there was nothing wrong in the man being a student, but it was a crime for him to let it take his mind from his duty, and if I had been the mine owner he would surely have been relieved. I could cite several instances of this kind, but it would be but a repetition to give them here, and I only introduce that one instance to show you that there are some dangers, that it is well enough to consider, and I want to be fair in what I advocate. However, this is not the fault of certification, but the failure to have it introduced early enough.

If it had been put in force sooner, there would have been no necessity for the man to study at his work, because he would have done that at school.

The young folks that are coming up will not be obliged to get their learning in that way, for it can be gotten earlier in life now. The sooner you introduce certification the more you will avoid that dangerous kind of work. I will close by saying that right now is the time to act and I hope you will. [Applause.]

PRESIDENT RAY: I am very much pleased with this paper, and it was read in a pleasant manner. I trust that the paper may bear fruit before we are much older. I am heartily in sympathy with the sentiments expressed therein and feel that the majority of the Institute are impressed the same way. It may hardly be fair to discuss the paper without the presence of the author, but if any additional thoughts can be contributed on this subject of members present, we will be glad to listen.

On motion a vote of thanks was tendered to Mr. Keighley for his paper and also to Mr. Lewellen for reading it.

No remarks on the last subject being forthcoming, the program was proceeded with.

PRESIDENT RAY: We have our poet laureate with us tonight and he has prepared for us our annual feast. I will introduce now Captain J. L. Morris.

CAPTAIN MORRIS: [Greeted with hearty cheers.] A certain gentleman in the audience to-day told me that I would not be allowed to come again to a meeting of this Institute if I did not prepare a poem about this meeting. I would do anything to come again, so I hurriedly prepared the following:

On the twentieth of January,  
We met in Columbus once more,  
To discuss our mining interests,  
Just as in days of yore.  
Hon. R. M. Haseltine and his department,  
Which are men of great renown,  
Who travel through our stately mines  
In city and in town.

There was Mr. Love of Leesville,  
And Jones of Lawrence town;  
Mr. Beattie of Hocking Valley,  
Who is a man of great renown.  
There was Mr. Miller from Shawnee,  
And Davis from Palestine;  
And Mr. McGough from Bridgeport,  
Who is looking quite serene.

Mr. Llewellyn from Jackson,  
Who lives in Coalton town,  
The Inspector of that district  
Of the State, which is well known.  
Now, we have finished with those men,  
We have told you what we know  
Of each and every one of them,  
So they'll be satisfied, I know.

Honorable R. M. Haseltine,  
The Chief of all these men,  
Is like Saul, the King of Israel,  
Good looking, tall and fine.  
He handles all the business  
At the Capitol of the State,  
And is also always practical  
In all he undertakes.

The President of the Institute,  
Professor Ray, I think, by name,  
Is tall and very handsome,  
And has raised himself to fame.  
He's kind, but very dignified,  
In all his ways and means,  
And when he talks about his work,  
He tells you what he means.

Henry Price, our aged veteran,  
Is always at his post,  
And whenever he is called to work,  
He's strong as any Host.  
But age is coming on just now,  
And we wish him long to live,  
To attend our noble Institute,  
As long as he may live.

Long may our prosperous Institute  
Keep up her precious name,  
And do the good she has begun,  
Until she rise to fame.  
And I wish good luck to every one  
Of our members, one and all,  
And when comes the time again to meet,  
We may all answer to the call.

CAPTAIN J. L. MORRIS.

The reading of Captain Morris' poem excited much good humor and hearty laughter in the audience, and at the conclusion of the reading he was tendered a vote of thanks for the production.

PRESIDENT RAY: We are now ready for the paper of the evening, by Mr. Edwin D. Haseltine, of Youngstown, who spent part of last summer in England and will read us a paper containing observations of his trip, with illustrations made from snapshots taken by him.