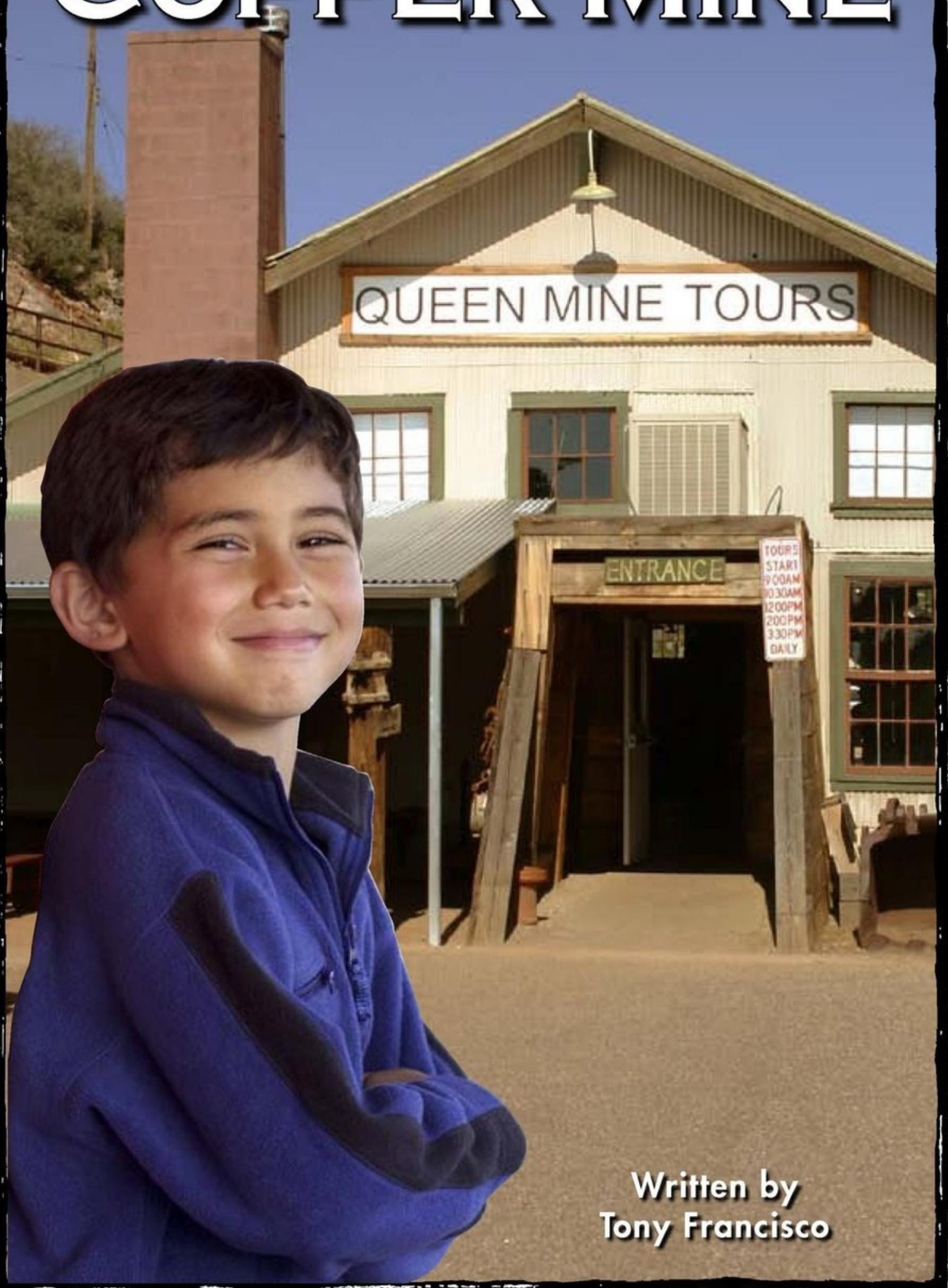


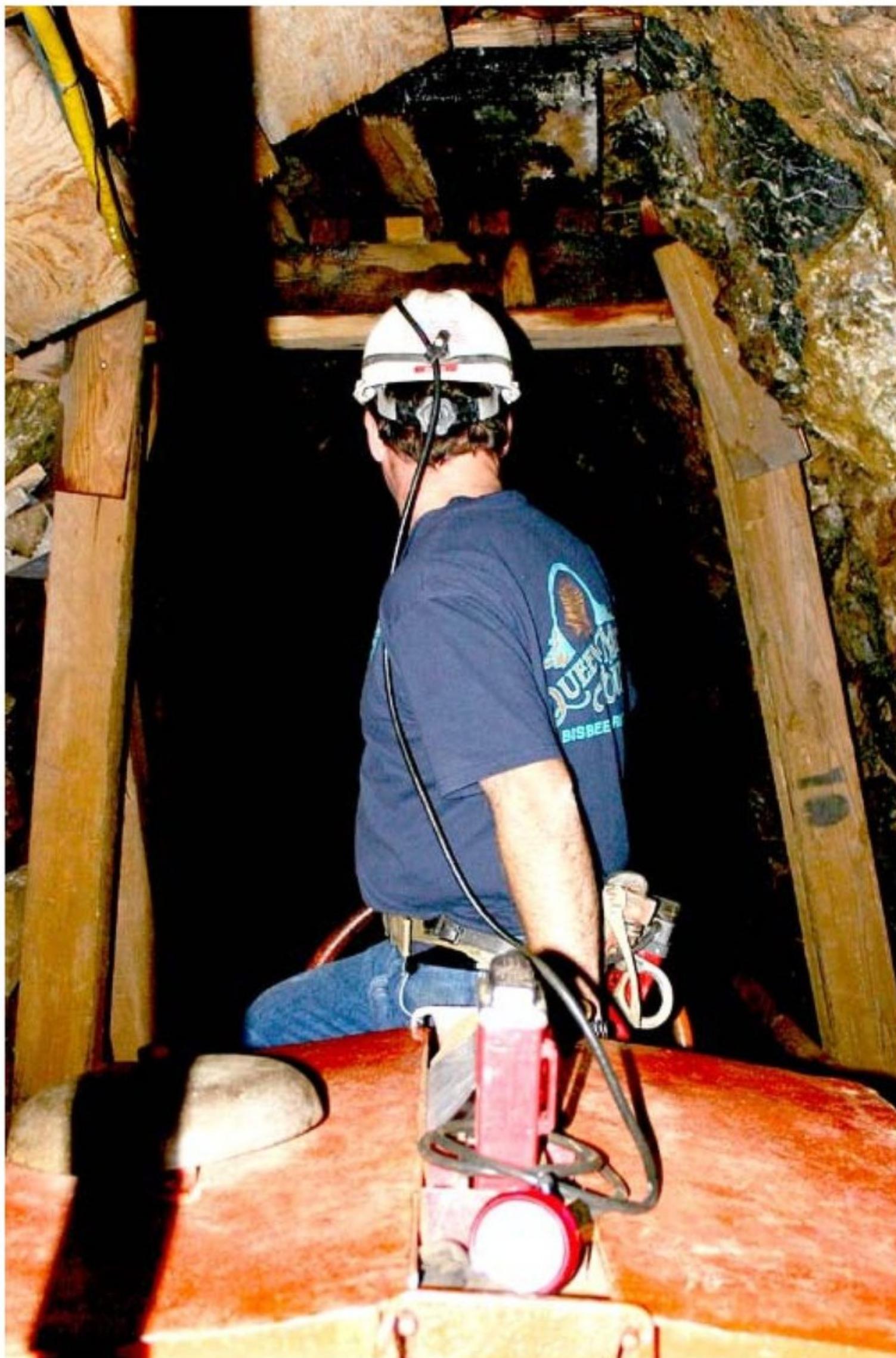
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DEEP INSIDE A COPPER MINE



Written by
Tony Francisco

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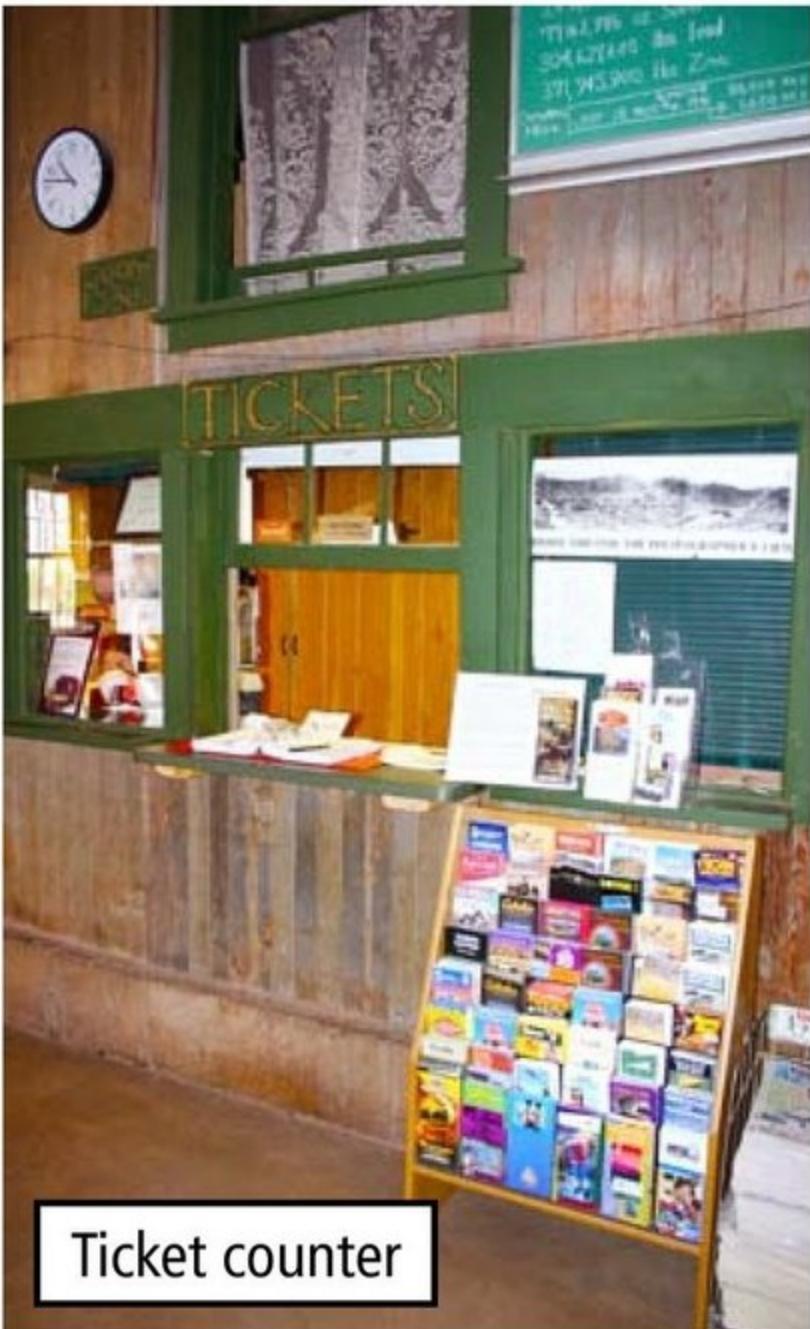


The parking lot filled up as it got closer to the time of the tour.

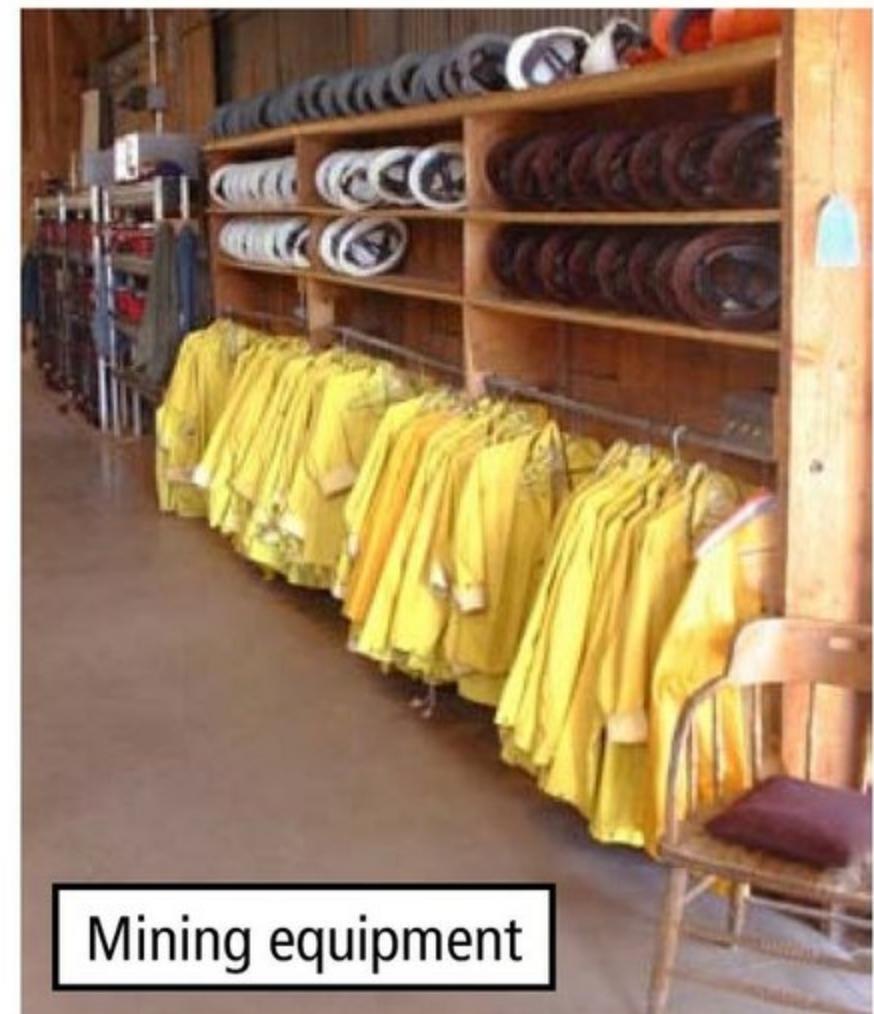
The Queen **Mine** Tour parking lot sat virtually empty at 1:30 PM on a hot March day. Mom, Sam, and I were going on a tour of the old Bisbee, Arizona, **copper** mine at 2 PM. My favorite blue sweatshirt was tied around my waist. Mom said the mine was like Grandma's house in Tennessee. Not too cold, but not warm. That translated into cool for me. On the tour, I learned that the mine stays at about 47 degrees Fahrenheit. Actually, that is downright cold to me.

I imagined walking through the front door of the Queen Mine Tour building and seeing a **humongous** gaping hole in a rock wall. Instead, I saw counters and shelves of **gear** on my right—yellow rain slickers, hardhats, and belt-looking things with lamps. There was an old fireplace spewing heat even though it was hot as the dickens outside. The room even

smelled like Grandma's house. Mom was more right than she thought.



Ticket counter



Mining equipment



Old mining equipment



slicker

"Time to go to work."

What I didn't realize was that the rain slickers were for us. We had to put them

on before going into the mine. I hated the whole idea of putting on a heavy vinyl coat that hardly let you breathe. First, I put on my sweatshirt, then the yellow slicker. It was stiff and made crackly sounds as I shoved my arms through the clammy holes.



I immediately felt a weight around my waist as the tour guide placed a **battery pack** around me. He showed me how to clip a lamp to my rain slicker; then, I heard it snap closed. The best part was that I got to wear a **hardhat**. It almost made the yucky, stiff feeling of the slicker worth the trip.

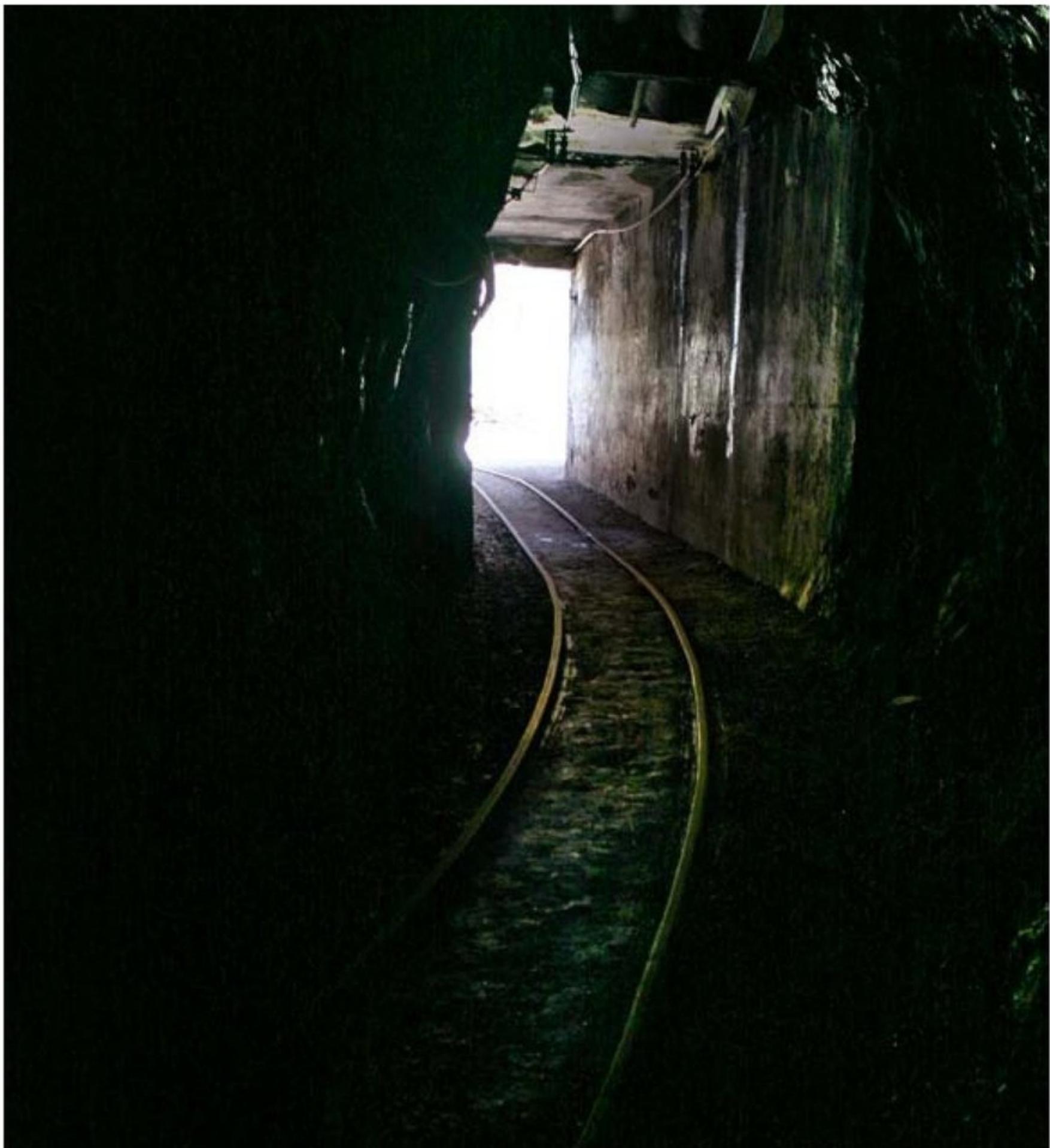


We walked through the building and out the back door to the outside. The sunlight hurt my eyes and made me see stars. My sweatshirt and slicker weighed more than I thought they would.

We climbed on board what the tour guide called a *man-car*. All of the sudden this was getting to be fun. Everyone had to straddle these padded benches in the center of each car like we were riding on the back of one long horse. The guide started up the engine, which sounded like a big lawn mower, and the man-car chugged toward the mine.



And we're off...

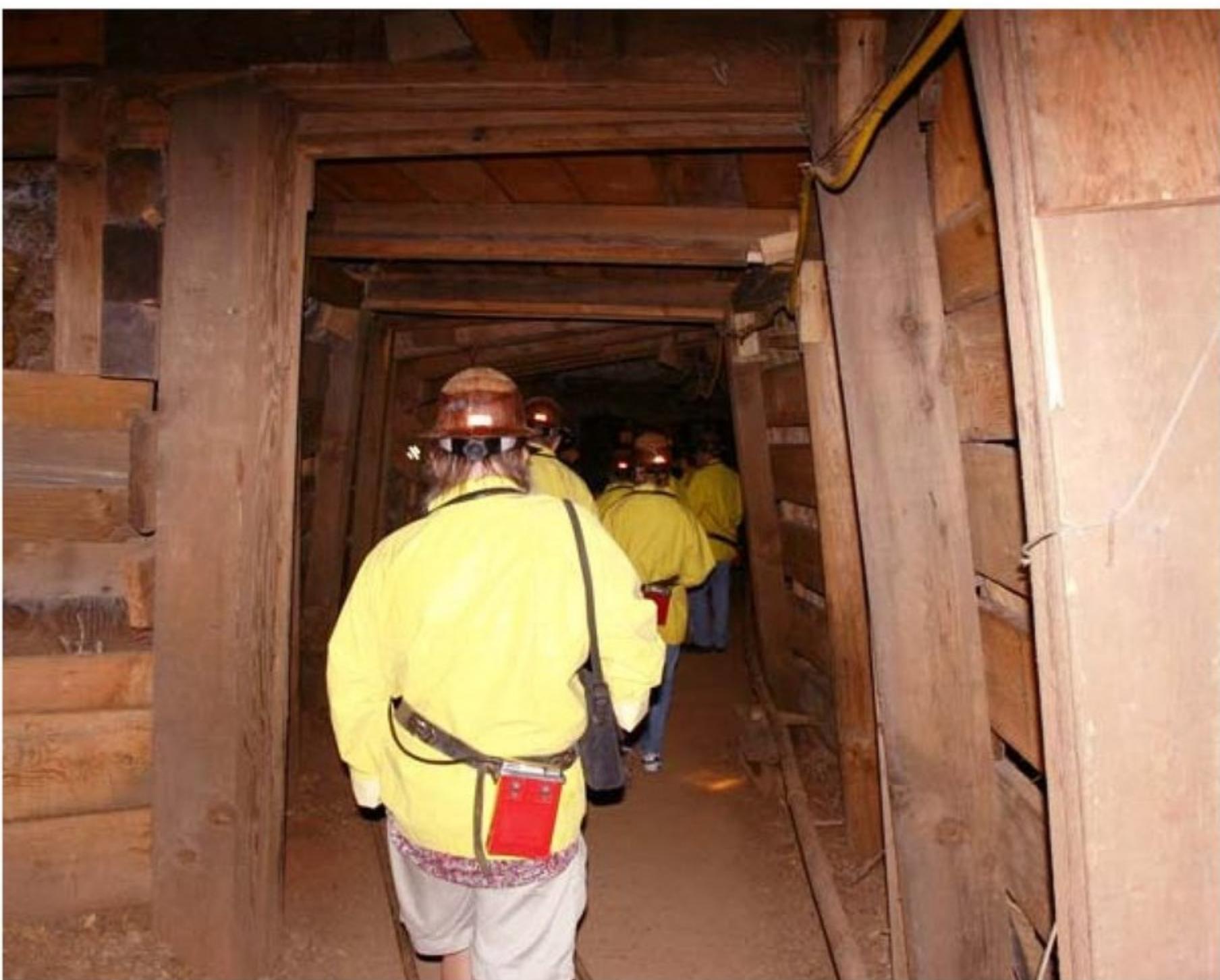


One last peek at sunlight

We got about 100 feet into the mine when the tour guide stopped. He said that if anyone felt **claustrophobic**, they could get off and walk back. Mom explained to me that some people are scared of tight places. I have to admit, the **tunnel** was pretty narrow and stuffy. No one turned back though.

The *clang, clang* of metal wheels on metal tracks made a racket in the tunnel. The man-car vibrated as the angle going down got steeper. The lamps we clipped to our slickers soon became the only lights in the mine.

The man-car stopped on the third floor down. We got off and walked through a side tunnel. This tunnel was wide enough to fit about three people across.



Through the spaces between wood slats on the tunnel walls, I could see dark rock.



A drill, top left, an ore shoot and an ore car, top right, and a toilet car, bottom.

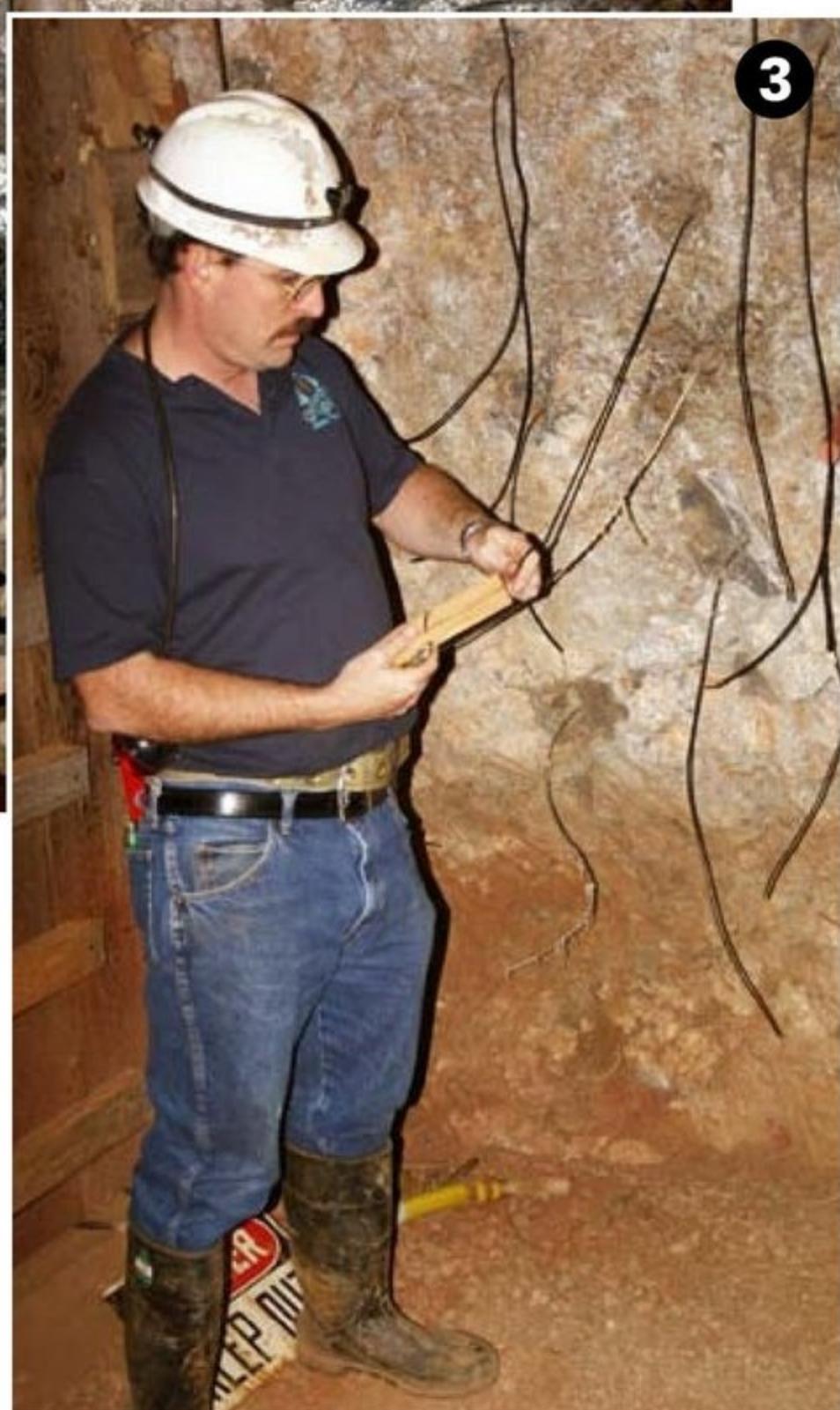
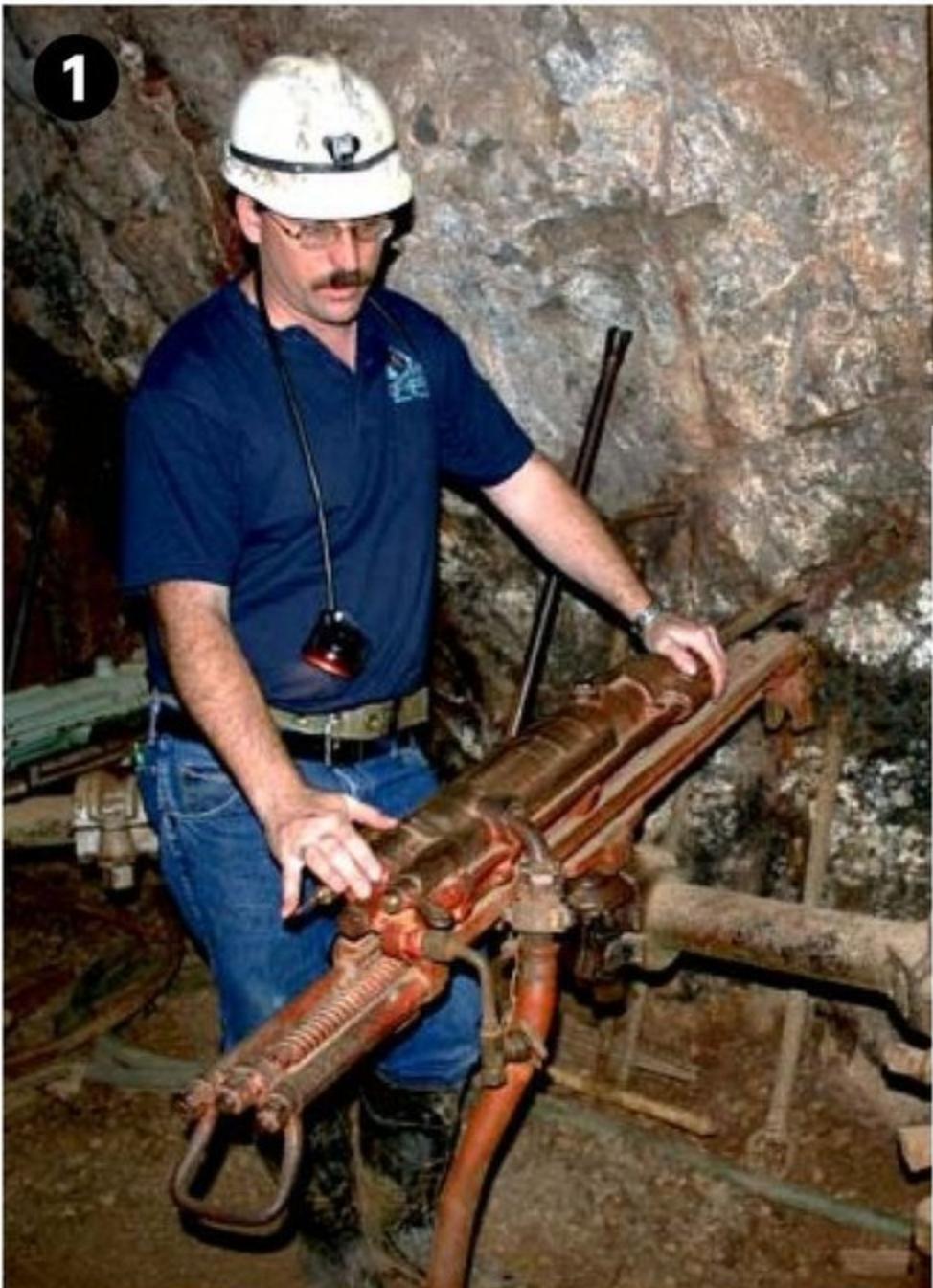
The air in the mine smelled and tasted funny. It was like I was breathing bits of the copper. It made my teeth hurt. The air was damp, too. Small patches of mud dotted the dirt floor. I could see why we needed the slickers as water drops fell from the rock above us.

The guide told us stories about his work in the mine. He showed us a cage, which is an elevator with wire mesh instead of walls. He said it took miners all the way down to the bottom of the mine. They would cram the elevator full of miners and then go down. Miners really couldn't be claustrophobic and keep their jobs.

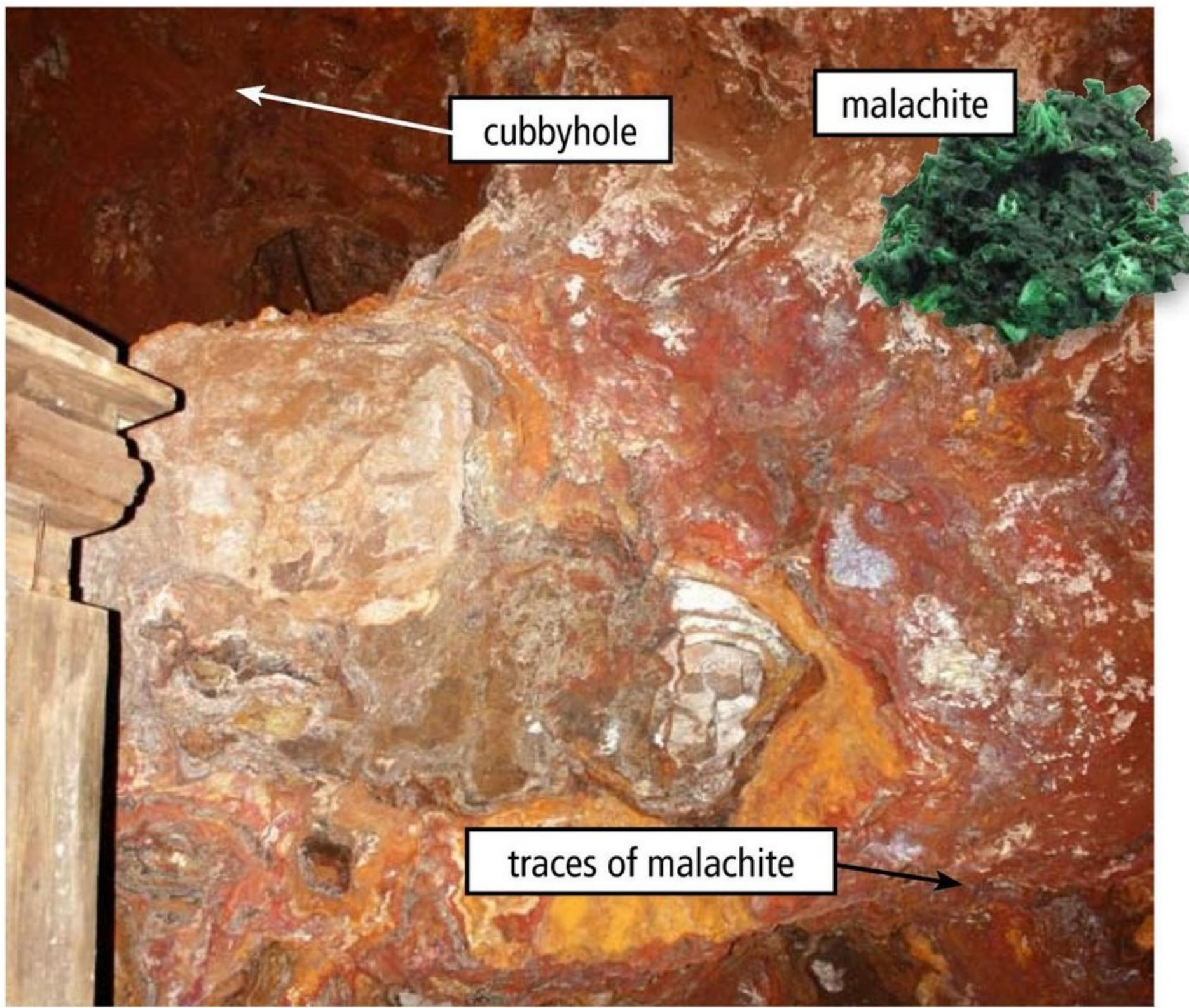


The cage didn't look like it would be fun to ride down into the mine.

The guide showed us some holes in the wall. Miners filled the holes with sticks of **dynamite** and wired them to blow up the rock. The miners would blast the rock at the end of their shift. After a blast, the air would be thick with dust, making the air heavy and hard to breathe.

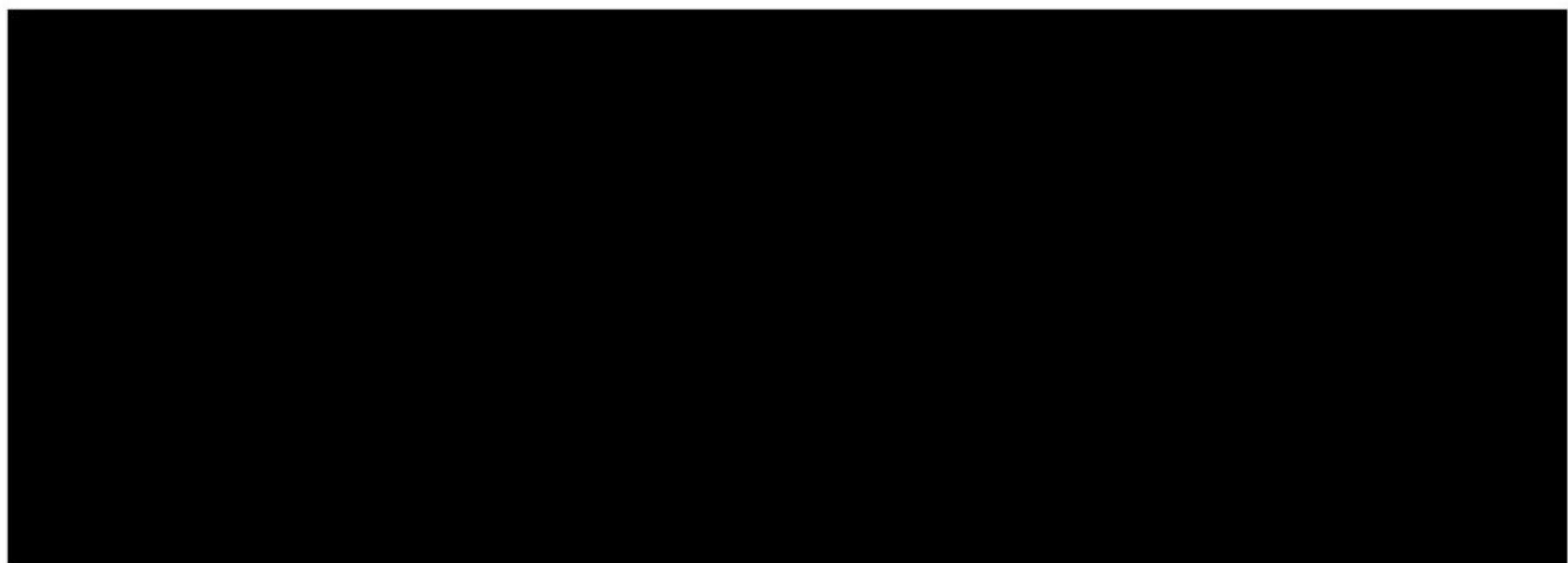


❶ A miner would use the drill, above, ❷ to make holes in the rock, top right. ❸ A stick of dynamite would go into each hole before being wired for blasting, bottom right.



The different shades of color in the ceiling showed us some minerals found in the mine.

We went to another part of the mine before we headed back to the top. This part was a big room with lots of little **cubbyholes**. The tour guide asked us to shine our lights on different parts of the room. I couldn't believe it! Every now and then, a light would glance off something with a dull shine. He said that was malachite, a beautiful green mineral often found with copper ore.



The guide turned off the lights, and here I am waving my hand in front of my face, which I can't see.

At one point in our tour, the guide had us all turn off our lamps. Oh, my gosh, it was so dark. I had never been in total darkness before. There was absolutely no light. I held my hand right in front of my face and I couldn't even see it. Just as I was beginning to feel scared, the guide had us turn our lamps back on.

copper ore

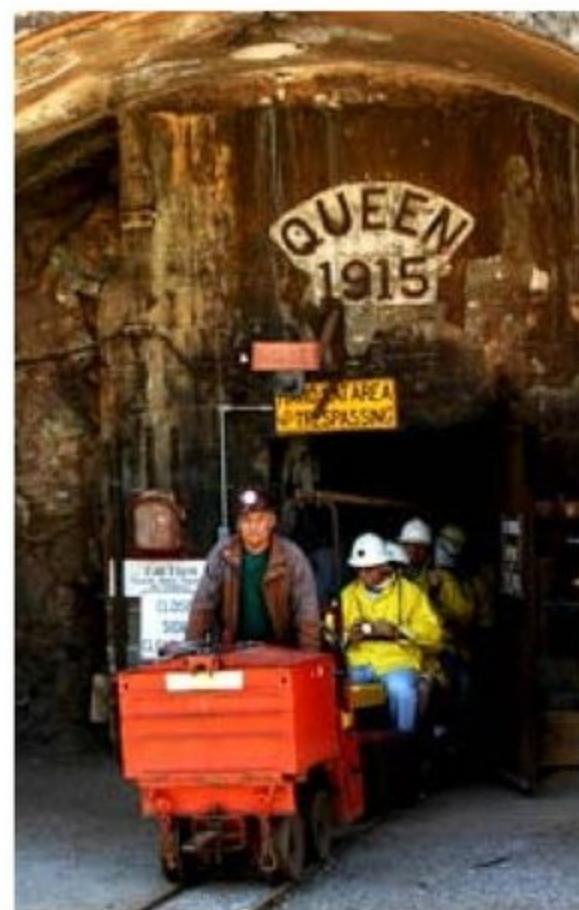


Do You Know?

The Queen Mine produced 8 billion pounds of copper in its 100 years of operation. The copper came from copper ore, which needs to be smelted before the metal in the rock can be used. Also produced by the Queen Mine were:

- 2.8 million ounces of gold
- 30 million pounds of lead
- 77 million pounds of silver
- 371 million pounds of zinc

When we got back to the top and the tour was done, I was happy to feel the sunshine. I couldn't wait to get out of the slicker, heavy belt, and hardhat. I ditched the gear where the guide said to, then ran to the fire to warm up. I couldn't believe I was so cold, but I was. Though it was later than when we arrived, it was still a hot 90 degrees outside, and that felt warm against my cold skin. Though I had enjoyed the trip through the mine, I had to admit that being a miner was not the job for me.



Everyone leaves to go home.

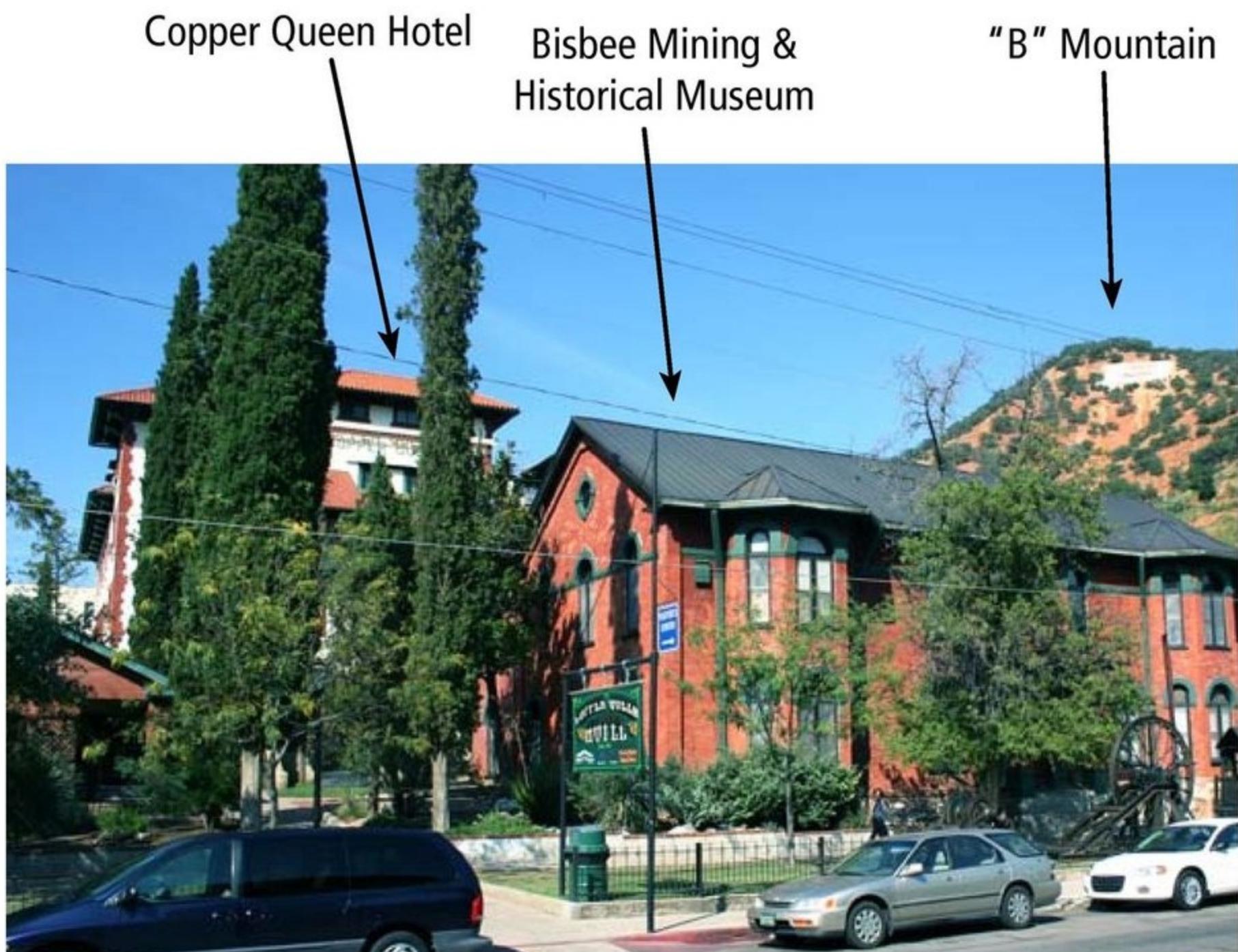
GLOSSARY

battery pack	an object that converts chemical energy into electric energy (p. 6)
claustrophobic	afraid of small, tight places (p. 8)
copper	a soft red-brown metal (p. 3)
cubbyholes	small spaces or rooms (p. 13)
dynamite	an explosive material used for blasting (p. 12)
gear	the equipment needed for an activity (p. 4)
hardhat	a covering made of metal or plastic to protect the head (p. 6)
humongous	very large (p. 4)
mine	a place where minerals are taken from the ground by digging or blasting (p. 3)
ore	a rock that has useful minerals or metals inside it (p. 13)
tour	a sightseeing trip (p. 3)
tunnel	a passageway constructed underground (p. 8)

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Cover (boy): © Jupiter Images; Back cover, page 13 (Malachite): © Giles Glod/iStockphoto; All other photos: Craig Frederick/© ProQuest Information and Learning Company

Title page: The sign above our tour guide's head shows that we're 1,300 feet (396 m) underground.



Visit these other Bisbee attractions after touring the Queen Mine.

Special thanks go to Queen Mine Tours of Bisbee, Arizona, for allowing Learning A-Z access to what was once one of the United States' most prolific copper mines.

To learn more about the Queen Mine, visit www.queenminetour.com

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Level P Leveled Book
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