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BISBEE'S QUEEN MINE TOUR CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF MINING HERITAGE

BISBEE, Ariz. (Dec. 20, 2005) – Each year, approximately 50,000 visitors don yellow slickers, hard hats and mining lanterns to tour the Mule Mountains' rich depths. On February 1, 2006, the Queen Mine Tour will celebrate its 30 year anniversary.

A hub of activity for nearly 130 years—first with mining itself, then as an authentic example of the mining process, Bisbee's Queen Mine Tour is one of the state's cultural heritage gems. A rich source of income and cultural pride for the city, tour participants venture in to view the site of its former operations site.

Tour guides, retired miners who lend a special air of authenticity to the tour, help visitors understand working conditions and relate personal stories. While in the mine, visitors view the cars, drilling equipment and the vertical shaft with its "cage," or elevator. It is a portion of this same mine that was involved in the transfer of more than eight billion pounds of copper ore.

Copper played a crucial role in Arizona's economic development, and the Queen Mine was one of the country's most prolific copper mines. Its rich wealth helped electrify the U.S., supplying copper wire during the rural electrification project. Beginning in 1877, it produced more than eight billion pounds of copper, nearly three million ounces of gold as well as silver, lead and zinc. Production continued through the 1970s.

When Phelps Dodge's mining operations ceased, Chuck Eads, Bisbee's mayor at the time, proposed re-opening the Queen Mine as a tourist attraction. In 1976, nearly 100 years after it first opened, the mine buzzed with activity once more. The tour helped spur Bisbee's economic development, turning it from a mining economy to its current state as a vibrant cultural community driven by tourism and filled with a historical preservation ethic. In March 2005, Bisbee was the first Arizona community to be named to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Dozen Distinctive Destinations list.

Five underground tours depart daily from the Queen Mine Tour building, immediately south of Old Bisbee's business district. Tickets for the underground tours are \$12 plus tax for adults, \$5 plus tax ages 4-15 and free for children under age 4. Van tours of the surface mine and historic district are offered four times daily and are \$10 plus tax per person. Children under the age of 4 are free.

For reservations or information on the Queen Mine Tour, call 1-866-432-2071 or (520) 432-2071.